■ SPORTS/A22
Agojo cops WCC title, player of the year honors

■ BUSINESS/B1
Peso seen strengthening to 48 to $1

■ METRO/A17
DOJ throws out Suzette Wang's appeal to drop kidnap charges against her

■ WORLD/A20
Bush won't rule out Iran nuke strike

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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RP teaches Singapore how to handle protests

By Luigi A. del Puerto

WHO SAYS THE PHILIPPINES, the notorious laggard of Southeast Asia, does not have a thing or two to teach a wealthy neighbor like Singapore? The Philippines may

AP TEACHES A6

Oil prices continue to soar; Senate OKs 3 energy bills

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Philip C. Tubeza

AS WORLD OIL/GAS PRICES GRAPPLE TO NEW record highs, the Senate moved closer to approving a measure mandating the use of locally produced fuel in the transport sector.

Three Senate committees—energy, agriculture and trade, and finance—approved Senate Bill No.

OIL PRICES A4

Old foes attend Erap birthday; bishop apologizes

By Volt Contreras and DJ Yap

HISTORY HAS A WAY OF BESTOWING birthday gifts.

It has given ousted President Joseph Estrada something priceless: an unintimidated chairman to work the crowds and the clout to win back adversaries and make loyal friends across political borders.

Estrada marked his 69th birthday yesterday with a Mass and breakfast buffet in a church not far from the courthouse hearing his plunder trial that theoretically could earn him the death penalty by lethal injection.

Several thousand supporters packed the church. There were Former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, the Philippine President's half-sister Cielo Macapagal-Salgado and outspoken Bishop Antonio Tobias who stunned the audience with his homily.

"I hope you can forgive the Catholic Church for what happened to you," said Tobias, obviously referring to the major role the late Cardinal Jaime L. Sin played in the 2001 People Power revolt that drove Estrada from Malacañang.

"In the name of Jesus, walk and move, Mr. President, for the sake of our country," said Tobias.

Galapgalo, then a senator, was a key figure in the events leading to the impeachment trial and the ouster of Estrada. But during Mass at the St. Peter's Parish on Commonwealth Avenue, he shared the front pew with the ex-President and some members of

OLD FOES A4

CATHOLIC priests pray over ex-President Joseph Estrada during Mass to celebrate his 69th birthday at the St. Peter's Church in Quezon City Wednesday. AGIP GARCIA

Erap admits Chavit gave ₱1M to son

By Volt Contreras and Nelson Flores

OUSTED PRESIDENT JOSEPH Estrada said that yesterday a son out of wedlock received a ₱1.2-million check from Rescue Star Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson as a birthday gift and denied it was meant to buy a ₱13-million necklace for his mistress.

In his fourth appearance for his defense in his plunder trial, Estrada and his examining counsel Jose Flaminiano did not touch on the check's source of funding.

It was brought up mainly to belie Singson's earlier statements on how the check—here a

SMAP A6

Drugs seen in Saudi slays

Turf war over shabu, lottery, says Jeddah source

By Volt Contreras

A TURF WAR IN THE ILLEGAL drug trade?

Members of the Filipino community in Jeddah are increasingly drawn to this conclusion following the mysterious disappearance of six of their compatriots and the discovery of body parts in the city two weeks ago, a source from Saudi Arabia told the INQUIRER yesterday.

A community leader, who declined to be named for his safety, also revealed that contrary to earlier Philippine consular reports, not just 13 but "over a 100 Filipinos" had been held for questioning by Saudi police concerning the chopped-up bodies.

The "drug angle" emerged as one of the six missing persons included a woman known in Filipino circles there as "Madam A," who has a reputation for peddling drugs (shabu or methamphetamine hydrochloride),"the source said.

"The basis over here is that what sparked the killing was the drug

DRUGS A4

PRESIDENT ARROYO, surrounded by military top brass, relaxes at the pool of new housing units for soldiers in Fort Bonifacio Wednesday. She is flanked by Vice President Noli de Castro (right) and former AFP Chief of Staff Efren Abu and AFP Chief of Staff Generoso Senga. MALACAÑANG PHOTO

SC rules unified ID system legal

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—THE UNIFIED MULTIPURPOSE identification card system being pushed by President Macapagal-Arroyo is constitutional and does not violate the right to privacy, the Supreme Court ruled yesterday.

The vote was 10-5, with Associate Justices Adolfo Azcuna and Consuelo Ynares-Santiago voting against Executive Order No. 420.

The 24-page ruling, written by Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, said the EO that Mrs. Arroyo issued on April 25 last year was not even "all-encompassing" because it was not compelling citizens to acquire the unified ID.

"It is not a national ID system," lawyer Israel Khan, spokesperson of the high court, told reporters.

Said the tribunal: "The right to privacy does not bar the adoption of reasonable ID

SC RULES A4

GMA certifies as urgent bill on abolition of death penalty

By Christine O. Avendaño and Christian V. Esguerra

FOLLOWING UP ON HER COMMITMENT OF DEATH SENTENCES, President Macapagal-Arroyo certified as urgent on Tuesday night a bill in Congress seeking to abolish the 22-year-old Death Penalty Law (Republic Act No. 7659).

But yesterday the President suggested that the law had a dim chance of being abolished.

"I expect problems," she said in a chance interview with reporters at the Palace grounds, where she extended a birthday merienda for Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

Mrs Arroyo was asked whether she expected the Senate, which had been at loggerheads with her since the political crisis began last year, to cooperate in approving the abolition of RA 7659.

She said she had already certified as urgent the House committee report recommending the abolition of the law, and lamented the purported tendency of the Senate to "always investigate rather than legislate."

"That's why we have to change the system of government," she added, taking the opportunity to again make a pitch for the amendment of the 1987 Constitution in order to switch to the parliamentary system.

At the moment, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita signed two letters, one addressed to Speaker Jose de Venecia and the other to Senate President Franklin Drilon, transmitting Mrs

GMA CERTIFIES A4

Mother of 2 women raped and killed vows to fight on

By Jhonnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—THE MOTHER OF two young women who were raped and killed in 1987 is back in the battle.

After appearing on Tuesday at a media interview announcing the President's decision to commute death sentences to life terms, Thelma Chang yesterday said she would fight it all the way.

She wrote a letter urging the President to reconsider the sentence of death row convicts, including five of the seven convicted of the rape-murder of

MOTHER A4

US Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenny addresses the American Chamber of Commerce in a Makati hotel Wednesday.

Frustrated prosecutor quits Subic rape case

Gonzalez: If he is openly disagreeing with me, he is free to resign

OLONGAPO CITY PROSECUTOR Prudencio Jalandoni said yesterday he would quit a rape case against two US Marines, frustrated over Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez's decision to reduce the charges against three of the defendants.

Jalandoni told the Associated Press he felt he would be ineffective as a member of the prosecution panel because he would keep on "worrying about whether I'll may be inconvenient with the position of the secretary."

Gonzalez's curt reply was: "If he is openly disagreeing with me, he is free to resign.... Ultimately, it will be the court that will decide this anyway" (See related story on Page A2.)

Gonzalez said Tuesday he found no conspiracy surrounding the alleged rape of a 22-year-old Filipina woman on Nov. 1 and decided to keep only one Marine as the principal defendant, who could face life imprisonment and the three others as accessories, who could face up to 12 years in prison.

"With that kind of development, your initiative and momentum will be stunted. You become frustrated and disappointed," Jalandoni said.

"I was thinking, what if the was a relative, or my wife, or my daughter, does it mean that we cannot go after them? And it can happen to anybody. Just because they are Americans, they are above the law?" he said.

Jalandoni also said he had a "heavy workload" of other cases.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye lashed Gonzalez, saying the Department of Justice did its job "objectively and impartially."

"This is not a political issue of forcing our relations with the United States as both countries are one in the search for truth and justice," said Bunye. "Let us keep our emotions out boy and allow the light of reason and fact to surround the truth."

US Ambassador Kristie Kenny told reporters the Americans would comply with all laws that

FRUSTRATED A4

'Cheering no proof of rape conspiracy'

By Armond N. Nocum

THE ACTION OF THREE UNITED STATES SERVICEMEN IN allegedly "cheering on" colleague Daniel Smith as he allegedly raped a 22-year-old Filipina in Subic last year does not make them "co-conspirators" in the crime of rape.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said this as he defended his decision to modify the charges against US Marines Keith Silkwood, Dominic Duplessis and Chad Carpenter from "principal to accomplice" in the crime of rape.

"The mere fact that the respondents were laughing is not proof of conspiracy," Gonzalez said in a 20-page resolution of the petition he received filed by Silkwood, Duplessis and Carpenter.

The three allegedly encouraged Smith to rape the woman in a forest on 31 November 2005 by shouting, "Go! Smith! Go!"

According to the Gonzalez resolution, the victim, in her sworn affidavit dated Nov. 2, 2005, claimed that while Smith was allegedly raping her, the three US Marines were laughing and egging him on.

Gonzalez said that the victim's statement "dog rape (kasong aso ay sarong iang)" (his compatriots were very happy), was not enough to prove that the three had "conspired and agreed to a common desire to commit the crime of rape."

"Conspiracy exists when two or more persons come to an agreement concerning the commission of a felony and decided to commit it," he wrote.

Gonzalez said the facts and circumstances of the case showed that the complainant "inadvertently failed to produce evidence that will measure upto the quantum evidence necessary to establish a prima facie case" or probable cause against Silkwood, Duplessis and Carpenter.

But the three certainly knew "what was going on in the back seat of the car" but did not do anything about it, so they should be charged as accessories, he said.

Gonzalez also said there could not have been a gang rape as alleged because "the physical conditions of the car will not allow a conclusion of gang rape."

The justice secretary said he would order justice prosecutors to file a motion to withdraw the previous charge and file a new one indicting Smith as principal, while downgrading the charges against Silkwood, Duplessis and Carpenter.

Smith remained a principal accused not only because of the strong evidence against him but because he did not file a counter-affidavit to refute the charges, Gonzalez said.

The Gabriela women's group said Gonzalez's downgrading of the charges against the three US servicemen was tantamount to rubbing salt in the

"Man probably it is a prelude to other maneuvers in the case that will eventually lead to the absolution of the suspects," said Gabriela deputy secretary-general Lisa Ledesma in a statement.

Party-list Rep. Liza Maza, who represents the group in Congress, accused Gonzalez of deliberately weakening the Subic rape case so that all four accused would be exonerated in the end.

"The downgrading of the charges is an outrage and insult of a cell-out. This weakens the case and jeopardizes the victim's quest for justice," said Maza. With reports from Alfa Saul Lim-Ubac and Norman Bordadora

2 drug fugitives fall, doomed men no more

By Luige A. del Puerto

TWO OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST-wanted drug traffickers were re-arrested two days ago, but luckily for the Chinese duo, they were among the 1,200 convicts whose death sentences President Macapagal-Arroyo had commuted—even before either of them had been inside a maximum security prison.

Police said Ronald Yee and Chan Lin Hui were sentenced to death in absentia by a Pasig City court in September 2003 after they jumped bail earlier on during their trial.

The two carried branches of Philippine drug enforcement agency's list of most-wanted drug manufacturers and traffickers.

They were nabbed last Tuesday near a mall in Pasay after a months-long surveillance, according to the PNP's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).

"However, with the latest move by the President to commute sentences to life imprisonment, their penalties have been correspondingly reduced," one police officer said.

Asked how the police feel about the commutation of the two convicts' sentences, PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao said: "This (commutation of death sentences) is a national policy which the police force will have to obey at the low, and our job is just to implement whatever decisions from our national leadership are handed down to us."

The escape of the two convicted drug traffickers raised questions about the ability of the Bureau of Immigration and the Land Transportation Office to spot escaped convicted felons and prevent their departure from the country.

Police said they had information that Yee left the Philippines in March and had just returned last Saturday.

"Our investigators are now directing with the Bureau of Immigration how this guy managed to leave the country despite the fact that he is on the most-wanted list of PDEA," said Chief Supt. Pedro Tango, deputy director of the CIDG.

Police arrested Yee carried a driver's license and a passport in bearing the name "Noel Chua." Yee had a driver's license with the name "Cecilio Chua."

The duo, together with another Chinese, Wee Ho Caridine "Roebel Dy," were first arrested in Makati on May 6, 2003, the same day that police raided a drug laboratory in Pasig City.

Investigators believed they were involved in running the clandestine laboratory.

Cop chief sacked after NPA raid

SOME 50 NEW PEOPLE's army guerrillas raided the police station of a remote town in Bohol on Tuesday afternoon, disarming the officers on duty and making off with six assault rifles and three shotguns.

As in a number of previous cases, Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao immediately relieved the police chief of Dagohoy town, along with the provincial commander and ordered the town's 18-member police force to undergo training.

Lomibao said the rebel attack showed a "lapse in discipline" among the local police force, which is to be replaced temporarily by the Bohol Provincial Mobile Group.

Relieved were Inspector Dindo Pelle, director for Sagbayan Precinct, Bohol Provincial Mobile Group chief Djalilo Ocle.

"This is in line with my policy that in case a police station was attacked and the policemen did not fight back, and rebel adversaries, namely the police provincial director as well as the country police director," Lomibao said. "We shall retain them so this will not happen again."

Reports from the area said the rebels arrived shortly after two commandeered bus, plying routes around 2 p.m. and took the detachment by surprise, stripping the officers on duty not only of their arms but their cell phones and money as well. The rebels then fled toward Antiquera province aboard two motorized motorcycles. With reports from Leila Salaverria, Del Puerto and reports from AFP AP

INVESTIGATING MUB

Former Muslim Mindanao governor and Moro National Liberation Front leader Nur Misuari wants to testify in the Department of Justice where he submitted his manifestation in relation to the rebellion charges against him and seven co-accused. On Misuari's motion, the Makati regional trial court had remanded the rebellion case to the DOJ after suspending court proceedings.

RP consul visits Mancao in Miami

By Jeremy Antig

THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF Investigation has allowed a Philippine diplomat to visit detained former police superintendent Cesar Mancao II in Miami, Florida, the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

Philippine Ambassador to the US Albert del Rosario requested in 2004 that Angelo Montenegro Jr., Philippine honorary consul general in Miami, was allowed to see Mancao in the local office of the FBI as "a special accommodation," Lorenzo said.

Del Rosario said the FBI told Mancao and his lawyer that Mancao was needed as "a material witness" in New Jersey, where an espionage case against Michael Ray Aquino is in progress.

Montenegro "observed that Mancao was obviously concerned and tired but composed and in good health," Del Rosario said.

According to Del Rosario, Montenegro received a call last April 14 from Mancao, who informed the consul that he voluntarily turned himself to FBI officials in Miami the day before after learning that he was being sought by FBI agents at his home in connection with Aquino's case, which is related to the White House espionage and Ghd

against former FBI intelligence analyst Leandro Aragoncillo.

The consul immediately proceeded to the FBI office to meet Mancao who, according to his lawyer, would be taken to the Federal Detention Center in Miami after FBI authorities completed their procedures.

The lawyer said Mancao had intended to file for bail the next day with the Federal Magistrate.

However, after learning that the US Attorney General's office was sending an officer to Florida this week to see Mancao, the lawyer said they suspended their efforts to get him out on bail.

Meanwhile, the DFA and another consul general, Cecilia Rodriguez-Ocon Roth, would be monitoring Mancao's case should the need be found to visit him.

Aquino and Aragoncillo were arrested by FBI agents in September for allegedly gathering and transmitting confidential information about President Macapagal-Arroyo to FBI files to several opposition leaders.

Both Mancao and Aquino fled the country before Philippine government investigators could include them in formal charges for the murder of publicist Rolando "Bubby" Dante and his driver Emmanuel Galino in November 2005.

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Mayuga as AFP chief possible – Ermita

AFTER COMING OUT WITH A REPORT ID-entifying top generals from complicity in alleged election cheating, Navy Chief Vice Admiral Mario Mayuga is reportedly among those being considered by President Macapagal-Arroyo to lead the Armed Forces after Chief of Staff Generoso Senga retires in July.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita would not confirm or deny that Mayuga was in the short list but hinted that his non-cheating image was not an impediment.

"The Constitution says that the President of the Philippines shall be chosen from among our officers, and any of the general and admirals of the Armed Forces is the active service. Therefore, it follows that senior officers and all the generals and admirals have the qualification to be chosen for the post of chief of staff," Ermita told a press briefing.

He said speculation might will be that Mayuga's being chair of the fact-finding board that investigated the poll cheating scandal would be a consideration.

With the military still reflecting cracks in its organization because of the adventurism of some officers, Ermita said loyalty would be the President's main consideration.

But he said it was too early to speculate on the case for the military's plum post and no names had yet been informed for the President's consideration. GUC, Gabuyanan Jr.

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Drugs seen in Saudi slays

From page A1

night. Manganan up to no good because the number of the group was crowded on the clerk's terminal," the source, a private citizen who has contacts in the consulate, said in a phone interview.

"Looks like there has been a turf war. Somebody engaged in double (drugs) and she in (illegal) lottery—mismatched upset the business interest of a different group," the informant added.

In Manila, President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to keep in close touch with Saudi authorities and ensure full transparency in the investigation of the missing Filipinos.

"The Filipino public must be fully informed of developments. This is a highly embarrassing incident involving a human element and we have faith and confidence in the Saudi police's capacity to conduct a fair and impartial investigation," Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said in a statement.

The source provided more details on the identity of the missing Filipinos, information so far withheld by the consulate and the DFA.

Butcher

Among them, he said, was a certain Dante Rivera who works as a butcher in Jeddah, a supermarket in the Jeddah International Market complex and which employs Filipinos.

Rivera is also known among his compatriots as "a basketball player by night" for he is considerably tall.

Three of the missing belong to a single family all also employed by Jeddah. Two of them are a couple, while the third is a relative.

This family, the source said, was known to run an investment racket known as a "Lotto Team."

"Madam S" belonged to this family who only use the alleged alias "ni a (twice to nine money for drugs)."

Saturation drive

"It was not yet clear if the remaining two who are missing also were in Lotto," he said. Reportedly, reaching the consulate said the are ordering, but not necessarily dead," the source added.

Among those "picked up" by police for questioning were Filipino businessmen. "Pareng ang ang ang ang ang pala (It was as though the cops were conducting a saturation drive)."

Life Greenbelt

Many of the arrests were made at the Jeddah International Market (JIM), a favorite hangout among Filipinos as the place is similar to Makati's Greenbelt, he said.

Hours before the Inquirer interview, he said he had passed by the JIM and heard "no more Pinoys" in the area.

The source confirmed an Inquirer report on Wednesday which quoted a JIM official as saying that a set of recovered body parts had already been pieced together. The feeble daily Dhan even carried a photo of that "reassembled body" he said.

The Philippine Foreign and Labor Departments are still at a loss regarding the circumstances of the arrests and prisons, and whether the Saudi authorities have in tagging the Filipinos.

DFA spokesperson Gilberto Bumpar said yesterday that the Filipinos were still regarded as suspects but they could be held incommunicado for up to 60 days.

Access to lawyers

"The Saudi police guarantees us that the Filipinos are in good condition in the place where they are detained and that they rights would be respected," Bumpar said.

The detained Filipinos have no access to lawyers or even Philippine consular officials.

All the Philippine consulate in Jeddah could do is the moment seek to make for the investigation to be completed and the restrictions are stifled.

"We need to follow the process of the law in Saudi Arabia but it's important that we can respond immediately when we see all Kuwait said," he said.

The Philippine Embassy in the Middle Eastern kingdom would also have a Shariah lawyer if ever a case was filed in court against the Filipinos. With reports from Jerome Aning and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

GMA certifies as urgent bill on abolition of death penalty

From page A1

Arroyo's letter "certifying to the necessity of the immediate enactment of House Bill No. 4826."

But Romulo was confident that the bill would pass Congress, citing the reported "bipartisan support" for the abolition of the Death Penalty Law.

"I don't think it will be a controversy," he told reporters, saying that the issue "does somehow only bind anything that the President did was being subjected to the intrigue.

He said these included reports that 90 Arroyo decided on the new policy of commutation in order to "win over" the sentiments of Catholic bishops.

Romulo stressed that the commutation would benefit some 88 death convicts whose sentences had been affirmed by the Supreme Court.

He said the 7809 death rulings in 1994. The first to be sentenced was rape convict Leo Echegaray, in January 1999.

Bishops being courted

But Novaliches Bishop Antonio Tobias called on his fellow prelates to be wary of the real motive behind the President's decision to commute all death sentences.

"One way of looking at it is that the bishops are being courted," Tobias said in a press conference.

"I hope bishops will be more careful," he said.

The outspoken prelate said he was aware that Ms Arroyo's decision came shortly after the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) issued a pastoral statement assailing the Malacañang-backed effort to amend the Constitution.

The CBCP had expressed alarm, saying the proposed changes were wanting in "moral justification" and were "dangerously unclear and open to manipulation by groups with self-serving interests."

Bishop Julio Xavier Labayen said there was no way the CBCP would be swayed from its position on Charter change just because the President had granted what the Catholic Church had long been seeking—a nationwide moratorium, and eventually the abolition of the Death Penalty Law.

"We don't think so. The CBCP is not on that," Labayen said in the press conference.

Contradiction

Asked if he thought the President was sincere considering the timing of her decision, Tobias said, "Time will unmask the truth."

"In this world, good and bad are so well entwined that it's difficult to separate them," he said, pointing out that despite her commutation, "civil liberties are being curtailed."

"There is a contradiction; there is no consistency," he said.

But at the Palace, Romulo dismissed Tobias' call on other bishops to be wary of Ms Arroyo's new policy.

"The President has been consistent since Day One," he said, adding that Ms Arroyo had granted reprieves to 164 death convicts since March.

Kokoy and Lubayen are pushing for another prayer rally scheduled at 2 p.m. on Friday to demand Ms Arroyo's resignation and overdrive Charter change.

The prelates, along with Cebuano Bishop Jesus Dosmagtas, are separately making getting bread down again, in what happened last year when they marched from Plaza Miranda to Ortigas.

They will follow the same route in leading the Kilusang Mamamayang Ilonggo (KMI) which hopes to gather around 5,000 participants.

"The people cannot and will not keep that the real issues bounding Ms Arroyo's administration are legitimacy and poor governance," said KMI spokesperson Jaime Regalado.

"We are against the continued government of Ms Arroyo's rules, by dint evidence, but been shown to be an illegitimate President with no mandate to govern at all," said the KMI statement read by Bishop Labayen.

Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao warned crime victims offended by Ms Arroyo's announced commutation not to resort to vigilantism.

"Wild, wild West"

"I'd like to caution those who would like to apply so-called 'judicial discretion' not to resort to that because we would not like things to go the 'wild, wild West' way," Lomibao said.

"We have our criminal justice system. Therefore, they should also observe the rule of law," he said.

He stressed, however, that his warning was unrelated to Malacañang.

Earlier, some victims and their relatives said they would deal with Ms Arroyo's move by resorting to the revenge principle of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

But Lomibao pointed out that crime was "not solely by criminals, but another crime."

"Each judicial observer will only lead us back to the discarded 'wild, wild West' days where justice comes from the barrel of the gun, when weighing heavily against the weak," he said in a statement.

He added that the PNP would not be deterred from going after criminals, even with the prospect of their death sentences being reduced to life in prison.

According to police, there is no sufficient basis to prove that the death penalty is a deterrent to crime.

Director Vidal Querol even pointed out that in 2004, even when no commutations took place that year, kidnap for ransom cases numbered 29—the lowest in a decade.

He said this showed that the death penalty was not necessarily needed to stop crime. With reports from Lodge A. del Puerto

Mother of 2 women raped and killed vows to fight on

From page A1

her daughters Jacqueline and Marlyn.

In an emotional radio interview conducted after the news that Ms Arroyo, Chiong said she initially took the news of the commutation calmly because it was Holy Week.

But when the thought sink in that her daughters' "rapists and murderers" might be set free, she said, she got very angry and hurt.

"I now realize why our country's justice system is called the criminal justice system. That's because justice (here) is only for the criminals ... We are a criminal-friendly country," she said.

In the letter, Chiong said her "two lovely daughters were kidnapped, handcuffed with masking tape around their faces, raped and tossed into a 1.50-meter ravine."

"And Jacqueline has yet to be found and is lost," she wrote.

She also wrote that while suffering the trauma of loss, her family went through the process of seeking justice despite limited financial resources.

"Madame President, what would I say to my children and to the members of the Coalitions Against Violence and the Children's victims of crime?" Chiong wrote.

"In this what you will justice? Because we have a law that calls for the death penalty. The heinous crimes, you should be the best example to implement that law. Do you think that crime against the sentence of those affirmed by the Supreme Court in death cases will be in jeopardy and is that relevant? Why should we please those who have been sentenced to death?" she wrote.

Chiong said that although she sent the letter by overnight courier she planned to present a copy to Ms Arroyo when the latter visits Cebu for the Battle of Mactan celebration on April 27.

On Tuesday, Chiong said she could accept the commutation provided the rapists would not be granted pardon or parole.

For yesterday, she said she could not contain her rage when the Inquirer broke the President had been congratulated for her move.

Ms Arroyo's announcement has been welcomed by the Catholic bishops and by the government of Spain, of which one of the seven convicts of the rape-murder, Francisco "Paco" Larrañaga, is a citizen.

Larrañaga carries dual citizenship because Mr Dolan, Manuel Francisco Larrañaga, is a Spanish citizen. His mother is Margarita Gamilla Gonzalez, granddaughter of former President Sergio Osmeña Sr.

Paco and his family have detained on his innocence, saying they had witnesses attesting that he was in Quezon City when the Chiong sisters were abducted in Cebu City on July 30, 1997.

The Larrañagas had sought and received support from the Spanish government and from the European Union in the course of appealing for a review of Paco's sentence.

In the interview, Chiong said the Catholic Church had taken the side of the convicts.

"There are so many victims of crime who are crying Christian. Did these priests and nuns ever think of us? The government has taken us for granted, and now it will consider the sentence of those who victimized our daughters? What can we find justice? What will stand up for us?" Chiong said, weeping.

Asked to comment, Msgr. Achilles Delong, media liaison of the archdiocese of Cebu, said Chiong had sought help from Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal during the rape-murder trial.

Delong denied that the Church had neglected Chiong. He said the Church had welcomed the announced commutation in line with its pro-life position.

SC rules unified ID system legal

From page A1

systems by government entities. Some 200 countries have compulsory national ID systems ..."

It said it was convinced of the legitimacy of EO 420 because the documents did not also compel the judiciary and other constitutional bodies like the Commission on Elections to use the unified ID.

"The document does not establish a national ID system because legislation is needed to establish a single ID system that is compulsory for all branches of government," it added.

No infirmity

According to them, the proposed unified ID only contains information that is already present in IDs issued by government agencies.

In fact, the Supreme Court requires more information from its employees than the 14 specific data that make up the unified ID and proposed by Ms Arroyo. Its ruling said to the ruling.

It added: "The Court is even trying to unify its ID system with those of the ... Court of Appeals, Sandiganbayan and Court of Tax Appeals.

"On its face, EO 420 shows no constitutional infirmity because it even narrowly limits the data that can be collected, recorded and shown, compared to the existing ID systems of government entities.

"EO 420 further provides strict safeguards to protect the unified ID system from data collection, in contrast to the prior ID systems, which are bereft of such administrative safeguards."

'Surprising' ruling

The ruling drew immediate reactions from the militant groups who challenged EO 420 in court.

The Kilusang Mayo Uno and the Bayan Muna party list group argued in their petition that your than EO 420 "blatantly ignored" the high court's 1998 ruling, which rejected a similar national computer reference ID system that was proposed by former President Fidel Ramos.

Neri Colmenares, lawyer of the two groups, said the ruling "surprised us because its proceedings was reinforced a government crackdown on the Arroyo's critics.

According to Colmenares, the technology on which a unified nationwide data banking system will rely on has not even reached a level where it can secure information.

He said facebook will leave information provided by agencies, which will issue the unified ID cards.

Colmenares said most of the justices missed the fact that a unified data collection system "will grow every time a citizen is born."

"It is the abuse of this additional information that we fear," he said. "But it is really the timing (of its release) that concerns us now."

The tribunal's ruling gives Ms Arroyo new access to information that will render the whole opposition vulnerable, Colmenares said.

Charged with rebellion

A number of the petitioners have had their movements curtailed.

Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran, former OAV chair, is detained on a rebellion charge.

Other petitioners, such as Bayan Muna Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casiño and Joel Virador, have sought the sanctuary of the House along with Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano and Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza while they challenge a similar rebellion charge.

At its infancy

These charges surfaced right after the President declared a nationwide state of emergency in February as a result of a purported left-flight plot to oust her.

In her dissenting opinion, Starex Santiago said that "other than the motherhood assurances of confidentiality, or that the data stored by government in a unified ID system will be used solely for establishing the identity of a person, or the proscription against violation of the right to privacy, there are no deep, special, and compelling guarantees that would dispel trepidations and suspicions of manipulation and abuse."

"Philippine jurisprudence on the right to privacy, not to mention the constitutional privacy, is at its infancy. There are very few rulings from the Philippine courts on given the opportunity to resolve and expound on issues relating to the right to privacy as a constitutional guarantee," she said.

Starex Santiago said the high court's initial ruling on the Ramos-proposed national ID system was notable for recognizing this right.

"The basic attribute of an effective right to informational privacy is the individual's ability to control the flow of information ... describing him ... To deprive an individual of his power to control or determine (with whom to share information of his personal details would deny him of his right to his own personhood," she said.

Chilling prospect

Like Colmenares, Starex Santiago doubted the technology that would be used to store unified IDs.

"Aside from the chilling prospect that one's profile is being formed from the gathering of data from various sources, there is also the unsettling thought that these data may be inaccurate, outdated or worse, misused," she said.

She added: "EO 420 failed to provide the yardstick on how to handle the subsequent and additional data that will be accumulated when the ID is used for private government and private transactions."

Frustrated prosecutor quits Subic rape case

From page A1

apply to the rape case.

No proof of conspiracy

"The actual issues before us tend to be impartial manner," the said.

Gonzalez said Tuesday there was no proof supporting the earlier conspiracy indictment in which "the act of one is the act of all."

Gonzalez said Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith remained the principal defendant and his former alleged co-conspirators—Lance Cpl. Keith Bell, Lance Cpl. Dominic Duplantis and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpenter—would be charged as accessories.

They belong to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Force stationed in Okinawa, Japan, and had defied transportation restrictions with Filipino troops when the alleged rape occurred on Nov. 1 inside a van at the Subic Bay Freeport.

Lawyering for accused

Gonzalez said the Filipino devil, earlier excluded from the case by a judge, should be charged as an accomplice.

Evelyn Ortiza, the woman's lawyer, said Gonzalez's decision indicated that "he is lawyering for the accused."

She said she would ask the court to review it.

"How did it happen that they became accessories when they were present during the commission of the crime?" Ortiza said. "We will not take this ruling down."

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JULANDONI

GONZALEZ

Key Christian bloc hops on to Cha-cha train

By Christine F. Espanero

A KEY CHRISTIAN GROUP HAS mobilized its members to add steam to the constitutional people's initiative purportedly being spearheaded by Malacañang to pave the way for a parliamentary form of government.

The Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) has begun conducting dialogues in different communities nationwide to prepare the public for (what he calls) a plebiscite, according to its national chair, Bishop Efraim Tendero.

Tendero said some 30,000 churches belonging to the PCEC were not bothered by allegations that Malacañang was using the issue of Charter change to divert attention from the scandal-ridden politics.

"We don't share that perspective. We see the people's initiative as a valid expression of the people," he told the Inquirer.

Tendero said the PCEC not known allies of President Macapagal-Arroyo—among "Christian denominations, which also include the Iglesia Ni Cristo Movement led by her staunch ally, Bro. Eddie Villanueva.

Tendero, appointed to the Malacañang-led Initial Executive Committee last year, said his group had been supportive of Charter change as early as 1996 and felt that the move minimized closely and constructively today.

In the ongoing education campaign, the Bishop said the PCEC was focused on three main amendments—shift to a parliamentary form of government, strengthening of the autonomy of local governments, and relaxing of the citizenship requirement for business operations in the country.

But Tendero made clear that the PCEC would oppose any effort to extend elections until year, a position he also took during the Elections at the Consultative Committees.

The PCEC's support behind Charter change contradicts the position of other denominations such as the prominent National Council of Churches in the Philippines.

The NCCP earlier said changing the 1987 Constitution was not appropriate at this time and indicated any "moral justification."

"The suggested changes by those who are pushing the campaign seem to convince what manage democratic rights and civil liberties that are now enshrined in the Constitution," it said.

"Now is a time when the government of a more authoritarian rule seems to loom in the horizon, we cannot allow Charter changes to set freedom."

Archbishop Rosalio Arcinas, chairman of the pro-Cha-cha Bajanayong Bayan led by transport leader and the coalition secretary general Efren de Luna said they would stage today a "Cha-Cha train" advocacy motorcade across Metro Manila as further crisis measures and boost acceptance of constitutional reforms among the city folk.

A follow-up of the Bajan ng Bayan motorcade held in Makati, Manila, Mandaluyong and San Juan before the Holy Week, on Jeepy Cha-Cha "express" will cover Manila, Caloocan and Quezon City. De Luna said in a press statement.

Lawyer Raul Lambino said some of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) posted statements of support on the Bajan ng Bayan website as the Charter Change Advocacy Committees (ACCoC) kicked off here Wednesday a three-day Mindanao "offensive" to boost popular support for the people's initiative spearheaded by the coalition.

Flight delays seen with runway closure

CEBU PACIFIC AIRWAYS YESTERDAY advised its passengers to expect delays in domestic and international service due to the closure of runway 13/31 of the Bajos Aquino International Airport for resurfacing starting April 17. The bases only Runway 06 is now old Bajos.

In a press statement, Cebu Pacific said runway 13-31 will be upgraded to handle bigger and heavier aircraft that are expected once the Mactan Bonifacio 1 more operations. The renovation is expected to be completed by July 17.

The airline said it was discussing with airport officials ways to ease the delays.

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Old foes attend Erap birthday; bishop apologizes

From page A1

his family.

Estrada's "I accuse" speech elevated the corruption charges against Estrada from the streets to the legislature. But after a falling out with Mr. Arroyo, whom he moved to her appointed Vice President, he crossed the political lines and backed the Estrada-led opposition bloc in the 2004 elections.

We were good friends

"Erap and I were good friends since our school days in San Juan. His brother died and I were classmates in elementary," Dalupan later told the tribunal. "His mother and my mother were also close friends."

"We just became principled adversaries in 2000," he said, when reminded of his "I accuse" speech.

That place, he said, "was based on the circumstances and the evidence against him at the time. And some he's defending himself."

"The strongest of steel comes from the furnace of fire. Erap went through the furnace of fire and today we have a new view of him and he has a new view of the world. He has new values, a new faith in God, and so we continue to be friends as we were in yesteryears," he added.

The bar for Salgado said she was not there because she was meeting a friend with the President, her husband Mike Arroyo and their daughter Lei.

Sister loves her country more

"It just happens that I love my country more than my sister," said Salgado, former vice governor of Pampanga.

Remorley's celebration was the 70th—and evidently most public—birthday bash thrown by the Estrada camp since he was ousted on April 25, 2001. The presidential parties were held just within his detention area, initially at the Quezon Memorial Medical Center and later at his Tanay Rizal, confinement.

In remarks delivered in Filipino after he received communion, Estrada said his birthday wish was "to have my name cleared."

For his supporters, he said, "I wish our people to be free—from poverty and want, fear and repression—and to be unconditionally free to seek justice and truth."

Alluding to his five-year detention, he said he had since learned "to embrace suffering not as a punishment but as a blessing. Indeed, this is the most precious gift from the Holy Spirit."

10 priests bless Erap

Up to 10 priests who concelebrated the Mass gave their blessing to the sober-faced politician who had been upset about his drinking, gambling and acting of children out of wedlock.

After assuring his supporters that "the Good Lord in His infinite mercy will help us overcome this Calvary," Estrada and the VIP guests proceeded after the Mass to the church's basement hall, where around 20 tables arrayed for free dining awaited them.

Supporters turned the normally solid church of St. Peter's into a fiesta complete with fireworks, orange and white balloons, a brass band, air-rubber dancers and fire-eaters.

The buffet table offered fried rice, pork tocino, shredded lipa (dried fish), scrambled egg, lumpia, rice cake, pancit, stuffed milk, ube jam, fruits and ice cubes.

Estrada spent just around 30 minutes at the breakfast reception before being escorted by police and bodyguards back to his scheduled pleadings hearing. A jubilant "Kababayan of the hotel" with his political leaders from the other poor not outside the church did not pack through.

Late court date

Estrada and company made it to the courtroom an hour late for the 9:30 a.m. hearing, but in expected, the birthday partying had seemed to have provided and his "apology" was accepted by the magistrates.

The justices and the chief pub-

FORMER President Erap Estrada reaches out to shake hands with Gloria Macapagal Salgado, President Macapagal-Arroyo's half-sister, at the St. Peter's Church in Quezon City, Wednesday. [illegible]

'Twas also Ka Roger's birthday

AND THERE WERE THOSE who celebrated birthday celebrants yesterday.

President Macapagal-Arroyo joined a feast of sweet corn, tuto-tuto and pancit molobot to mark the 61st birthday of Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye at the Palace grounds. He said his wish was for Bunye to be happy and healthy.

It was also Sen. Boy Pagilo's forty-something. Organic "Ka Roger" Rand's 100th birthday. Sen. Edgardo Angara, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita graced Boyd and chatted as he urged him to join the government side. *Christine O. Avendaño*

lic prosecutor said their grievings, and a smiling Estrada nodded back. Meeting back break, prosecution did not object to the defense panel's motion to have the afternoon session canceled because the accused, the court was told, had so many well-wishers to attend to for the rest of the day. *With a report from Ira Zenaida*

Erap admits Chavit gave . . .

From page A1

piece of evidence for the prosecution—came about and changed hands.

Contrary to Singson's earlier testimony in the 3-year-old trial, Estrada said the check was not part of the funds raised by drug lords in 1999 to buy the necklace as birthday gift for one of the ex-President's mistresses, his state counsel Rafael Rodriguez.

Instead, Estrada said, Singson gave the check as a gift to one of his children with his mistress, Julie, who is Singson's godson. Julie received P1 million while his two other siblings got P100,000 each, Estrada said.

He wanted to ingratiate himself

"I was surprised. I didn't know why the amounts were that big. Probably he just wanted to ingratiate himself," he said of Singson. Manila alleges that gift giving the friendship brand and Singson exposed the "bunying," or illegal numbers, racket that Estrada allegedly ran in Ilocos Sur.

It cannot possibly be a gift for Singson more her birthday bills on Sept. 22, whereas the check was issued on Dec. 22, 1999, Estrada added.

Estrada said that he had never seen that check and that it was only mentioned to him by Dalupan.

Bank transactions showed him as the recipient of the check, Estrada replied. "Probably this is the check."

Check from Estrada payola

On July 18, 2002, Singson testified that the check he represented his share subject to and only to Estrada's pals agreed to buy the engraved necklace for Dalupan. The suggestion to pass the bar around, he said, came from businessman Mark Jimenez.

Then testifying as prosecution's star witness, Singson said the check was from his Metrobank account that allegedly contained Estrada's payola collections from jueteng lords.

He then said he found the contribution for the necklace "too much" that's why he drew one from his own pocket but from Estrada's concession.

In that same 2002 hearing, then Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo said the check ended up being deposited in Dalupan's account with a Philippine Savings Bank's branch in Marikina, Quezon City.

In a text message, Singson yesterday insisted on his earlier story. "He pocked out resources to buy Lucci a gift," Singson said.

Denials continued

Estrada's court appearance yesterday was only for 90 minutes. He was later prepared to attend to well-wishers on the 69th birthday (See related story on this page).

In his previous testimony, Estrada denied charges that he pocketed P545 million in payoffs to protect illegal gambling operators, calling the allegations nothing but lies.

Overall, prosecutors allege Estrada amassed about P4 billion from jueteng payoffs, tax kickbacks and commissions stashed in secret bank accounts under an alias. Estrada also faces a perjury charge for allegedly under-reporting his assets in 1999.

Estrada continued his denials yesterday, dismissing charges that the establishment of the Erap Muslim Youth Foundation was by money laundering purposes. He said all the foundations he had established during his presidency were meant to help the poor.

Their incorporators included some of the most outstanding Filipinos, including former Sen. Jovito Salonga, and top businessmen, Estrada said.

RP teaches Singapore how to handle protests

From page A1

not be as rich but it sure knows how to handle civil liberties issues, including antigovernment protests and demonstrations, a high-ranking police official said.

In fact, Singapore is seeking the expert advice of the Philippine National Police in crowd control and management, knowing that while demonstrations are "unusual" in Metro Manila, there have been no double bets," said Director Vidal Quorol, the chief of the National Capital Region Police Office.

The day one year, one of the world's most prosperous nations but also one of the most politically restrictive, wanted to learn how to deal with protesters during the International Monetary Fund-World Bank conferences to be held in the island in September, said Quorol, who met with visiting Singapore officials yesterday.

Singapore has put place strict limitations on citizens' right to free speech and peaceful assembly.

The island-state will have to banish hitherto unknown or nonglobalization groups threaten to disrupt or be antiregime and other errors in an attempt to duplicate their success in previous protest actions against similar international gatherings.

"I gave them some tips and tricks of how to a crowd disturbance management competition on Sunday," Quorol said.

"I want to show them the process of negotiation and dispersal," he said.

Some of the tips that Quorol gave the Singaporeans included the following:

- All police actions must have legitimate.
- Make sure that protesters and policemen alike do no carry guns. Intelligence gathering is crucial before the day of the protest action.
- Bring a video camera as a demonstration is recorded and can be reviewed for assessment.
- Have the records of the order of police. They must learn not to carry to counts, marks and other provocations.

Recommendations for the global meeting should also include much demonstrations as anyone squeeze can somehow themselves in a crowd-crowd, said Quorol.

The police official said he told his counterpart in the Philippines "people are able to "capture demonstrations" prevents peaceful.

"I want to teach them how to do it, how to disperse and to employ maximum tolerance," he said.

Some demonstrations in Metro Manila have, in fact, turned ugly in the past few months. There have also been some high-profile arrests, but only a few prosecutions and judgments have been actually fact in the rallies.

Street rallies are virtually unknown in Singapore. A permit is required for any form of public speech or demonstration under its Public Entertainment Act.

While the Constitution gives Singapore citizens the right of peaceful assembly, the government restricts this right in practice in the interest of security. A gathering of five or more persons, including political rallies, require permits from the police.

A few years ago, an opposition Member of Parliament was tried and convicted for attacking the government for lack of accountability in the ownership of public funds and for curtailing the government freedom of speech in public speeches, without obtaining a permit.

This law, however, was relaxed two years ago. Permits are no longer needed for indoor speaking events.

Singapore's Internal Security Act, which has been employed against suspected terrorists, also provides for warrantless arrests.

Historically, these measures have been commonly related.

Oil prices continue to soar; Senate OKs 3 energy bills

From page A1

2006, the proposed Biofuels Act of 2006, which aims to reduce the country's dependence on imported oil by tapping biofuels like those obtained from plants and animals.

The bill seeks to establish the Philippine Biofuel Board (PBB) to implement the Philippine Biofuel Program, including the setting of standards for biofuels and biofuel-blended gasoline and diesel.

Twenty senators signed Senate Bill 2020, Senate No. 55 which will be up for approval by the plenary when session resumes next month, including Senators Mirriam Santiago and Manuel Villar, chairs of the energy and finance committees, respectively. Sen. Rodolfo Biazon signed the report on behalf of food and agriculture committee chair Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr.

The Arroyo administration is considering two measures to mitigate the impact of rising oil prices on Filipino consumers.

"That's why it's important that we push for our program to search of other sources of energy like ours also derived from other fuels, LPG, compressed natural gas, windmills and others," President Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday at a new housing project for soldiers near Fort Bonifacio in Makati.

Crude oil futures surged to their second highs on global markets yesterday amid growing fears of a possible military conflict between the United States and Iran.

The benchmark May contract for light sweet crude hit a closing high of $71.25 a barrel and traded at high as $71.60 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange, an all-time record.

This reached the record of $70.85 a barrel last Aug. 30 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which ravaged US oil operations in the Gulf of Mexico.

Brent crude hits $72.64

The price of Brent North Sea crude oil also hit records in London as the market feared that an attack on Iran could lead to a disruption of its oil exports. The June contract for Brent traded as high as $72.64 a barrel, an all-time record, before settling at $72.51.

Adjusted for inflation, current oil prices remain below levels reached after the 1979 Iranian revolution when they surged to upward of $80 a barrel in today's money.

Washington has accused Iran, the world's fourth biggest crude producer, of working secretly to build nuclear weapons under cover of a nuclear energy program. The US government has declined to rule out possible military action as an option.

Global foreign analyst Simon Mitchell said prices could reduce to above $150 a barrel if Iran retaliated to any US attack by disrupting oil shipping off its coastline.

Because it shares line the narrow Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, Iran could quickly hit both military and commercial shipping with missiles launched from land, air or sea as well as cripple marine traffic with mines or sunken ships, analysts say.

Greenhouse gases

The Senate bill cited three reasons for tapping into indigenous and renewable sources of fuel: To reduce the country's dependence on imported oil, to mitigate toxic and greenhouse gas emissions and to increase rural employment and income.

The measure seeks to order the mandatory use of alternative fuels like bioethanol, biodiesel, natural gas, electricity, hydrogen and compressed LPG on vehicles instead of gasoline and diesel.

It will involve the use of bioethanol produced from sugarcane and biomass such as animal, municipal or industrial wastes and biodiesel or fatty acid methyl ester derived from vegetable oils or animal fats.

The bill provides that a minimum of 1 percent biodiesel shall be blended in all diesel engine fuels sold in the country immediately after the enactment of the Biofuels Act into law and 2 percent within two years of the law's implementation.

The PBB shall be empowered to increase the percentage up to 10 percent within four years after reviewing the viability of the biofuels program and availability of sources.

"Tax incentives will be given to encourage the production and distribution of biofuels. To ensure the mandatory use of biofuels, the bill provides for a penalty of three months to one year imprisonment and a fine of P50,000 to P200,000 for those found violating the law.

In the House of Representatives, Majority Leader Prospero Nograles asked the Senate to give priority to the approval of House Bill No. 6220, the proposed Biofuels Act of 2005, which would help make the country self-reliant in the fuel sector.

In a statement, Nograles said the bill had long been approved by the House after Ms Arroyo certified it as urgent, "and yet the Senate is seemingly just sitting on it."

Take control of Petron

Warning of an imminent "economic meltdown" due to soaring world oil prices, Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco called on government to take back control of Petron Corp. and its "strongly interested" in serving oil prices in the country.

The government sold 40 percent of Petron to oil giant Saudi Arabian Oil Co. (Saudi Aramco) in 1994.

"The smaller oil players (Petron) should be linked to offering a more competitive pricing mechanism through the years that would have leveled the playing field long ago as convinced by the Oil Deregulation Law," Cuenco said.

Cuenco, chair of the House committee on foreign affairs, also said that the country needed to "adopt a stronger state intervention in the pricing of oil prices and in distribution in the domestic market."

"Among other things, we need to immediately introduce amendments to the Oil Deregulation Law which has failed to address what reforms that should have been long achieved in that the Filipino masses would not be heavily burdened every time (oil-exporting) countries sought a hike in prices further their blood oil coffers," he said in a statement.

Cuenco blasted the administration's energy-saving proposals as "using a spoon to paddle our way out of the crisis rather than finding a bigger oar."

Summer of discontent

Anakpawis party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran said the impact of the administration tax measures last week and soaring oil prices would lead to a "summer of discontent," particularly among those already mired in poverty.

Aside from programs which would help ease the impact of high oil prices on the local economy, Ms Arroyo said she was exploring other measures, including making cheaper medicine available all over the country.

Ms Arroyo estimated her sales or announcement that the administration was able to cut up more than 5,000 of the most prescribed the most commonly used medicines at 3,000 price levels. *With a report from AFP*

FPJ's National Artist award never withdrawn – NCCA

By Alexis Pope and Melody Aquino

THE NATIONAL Artist issued FPJ the late Fernando Poe Jr. was never withdrawn, according to Cecille Guidote-Alvarez, executive director of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

Alvarez made the clarification to newsday's Cecilia Pedroso minutes before the Senate hearing today. She added that the award for FPJ, who ran against President Macapagal-Arroyo in the 2004 elections, had already been approved by Malacañang and there was no use turning the matter into a political issue.

"There was never a withdrawal. The truth is that the selection of FPJ has been affirmed by President Arroyo and was never taken back. I think that the whole issue of FPJ's inclusion is the list of the National Artist awardees has been needlessly spun for political purposes," Alvarez said.

She said Mr. Arroyo "has the last say since she is the final arbiter of the awards."

The broadsides over the National Artist awardees started last week when Malacañang released the list of this year's awardees and quickly withdrew it, saying it was "not final." Aside from Poe, included on the list were Benedicto Cabrera (also Bencabre), Cecilia Manguerra Brainard for literature, Samson A. Dinoan for dance, Ildefonso S. Santos Jr. for architecture, and the late Nanette Inciong for fashion design.

The list was taken back by the Malacañang because it had not been finalized yet. Alvarez said, echoing the explanation Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye gave last week.

She also called on the family of Poe, including his widow Susan Roces, to accept the award. Last year, Roces accused Ms Arroyo of stealing the presidency from her husband.

"I know her as a good actress and a lady. Personally, I don't believe she would use this (the award) as a vehicle for political intrigue and drama," Alvarez said.

She also said Roces had every right to refuse the award. "She can refuse it; we can't do anything about that."

Meanwhile, Alvarez also announced that the Philippines will play host to the 31st World Congress and Theater Olympics sponsored jointly by the International Theater Institute and Unesco from May 16 to May 29 this year.

The said shows 150 participants are expected for the World Festival of Drama Schools to be held during the event. Alvarez said the participants, which include some of the world's best theater performers, will show their commitment to use their talents to fight global illiteracy, poverty and injustice.

"The power of the arts should... be mobilized to have a healing effect on the wounds of our national psyche," Alvarez said.

Maui mayor coming for immigration centennial

KAHULUI... MAYOR Alan Arakawa will leave for the Philippines this week to mark the centennial of the first immigration of Filipino farm workers to Hawaii.

In the two-week trip, Arakawa is scheduled to meet with President Macapagal-Arroyo at the Malacañang Palace and to tour ancestral sites and the University of the Northern Philippines.

In 1906, a group of 15 farmworkers, also known as "sakadas," left the Philippines to come to the flip island to work in sugarcane fields. Since then, the mayor's Filipino-American population has grown to more than 275,000, second only to California, where more than 1 million live.

Arakawa and his wife, Ann, will be joined by 100 Maui residents, including Spokesman Tabangcura, a native of the Philippines who gave 45 years of service to Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Co.

The 79-year-old Tabangcura has returned to the Philippines three times since the 1960s. But he has never been back Cabugao, Ilocos Sur, from where he left for Hawaii in 1946.

"This is a very special trip for us," said Gloria Tabangcura, Spokesman's wife. "We don't want to see the barkada (where he left to go) here."

Arakawa, who will visit the Philippines for the first time, is hoping to reinforce historical, cultural and economic ties and reaffirm diplomatic relationships between Maui and sister cities.

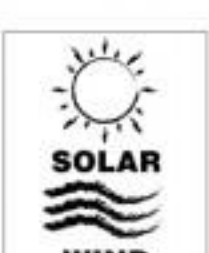
The county has at least three sister cities in the Ilocos region of the Philippines.

Arakawa said he grew up on his family farm, which employed as many as eight Filipinos from the Philippines.

"And many Filipinos were also customers in our farm, so I heard a lot of stories about the Philippines," he said.

Aside from the mayor trips, Arakawa will visit neighboring cities and towns and will include his visit in Tagaytay and Manila.

AP



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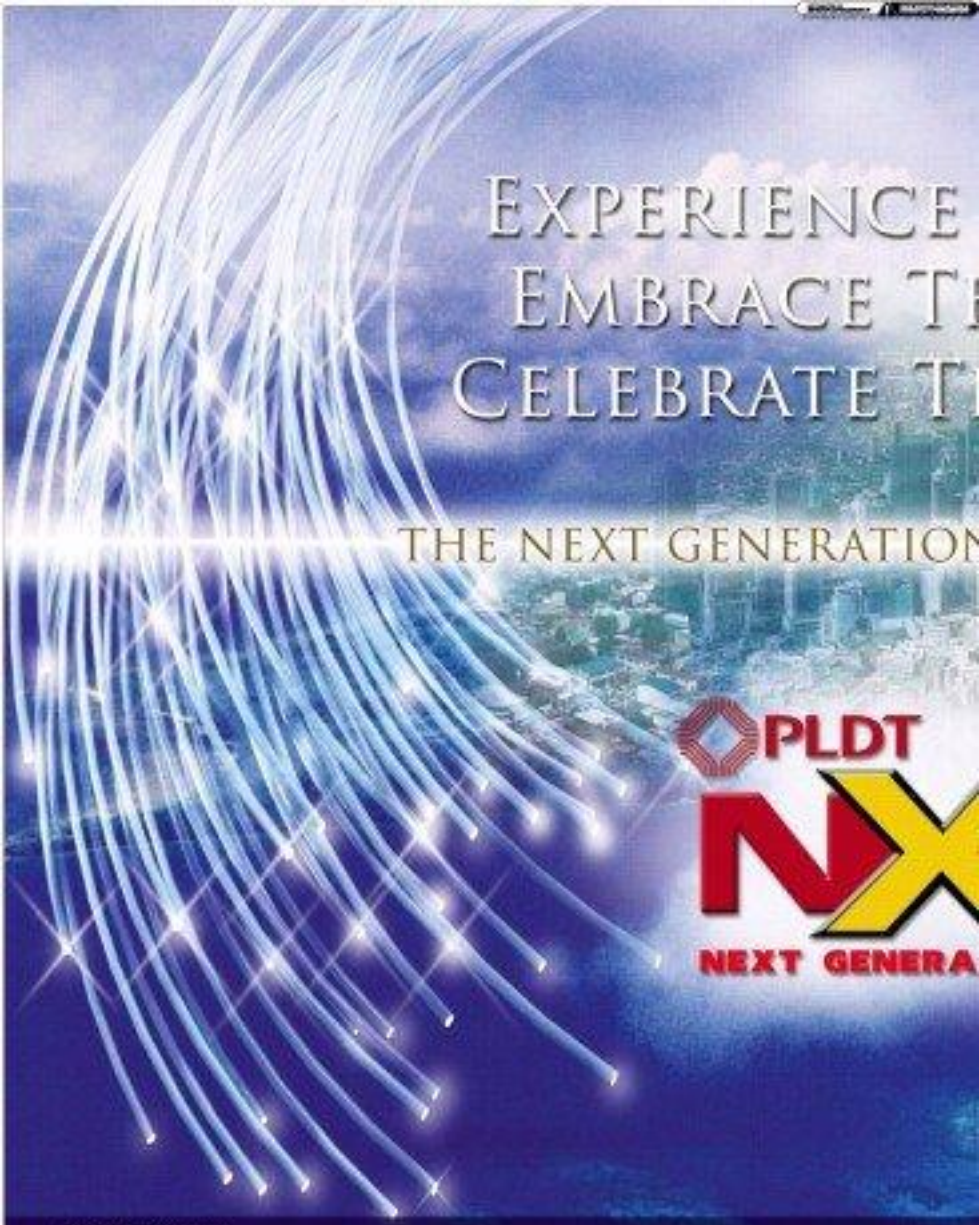

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

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Profiteering

OIL COMPANIES NEVER SEEM TO RUN OUT OF excuses to raise prices. Last year, the reasons were hurricane Katrina, the approach of winter and various political developments that threatened a disruption of oil supplies. This time, with crude oil prices again breaking last year's record and soaring to a new high of $73.46 per barrel, the reasons being given are as many and variedly trouble in Nigeria over the sharing of oil revenues, the worsening confrontation between the United States and Iran over the latter's nuclear programs, Iran's $58 million aid to the Hamas-led government of Palestine, the approach of summer in the United States when Americans drive around more than in any other time of the year, and China's 10.2 percent economic growth rate which is expected to keep its appetite for oil healthy. What is glossed over or simply not mentioned is the almost insatiable appetite of the oil companies for profit.

EDITORIAL

If any industry has perfected the art of turning crisis into opportunity, it must be the international oil industry. The nature of the crisis doesn't matter. Whether a political storm blows or a real hurricane strikes, the oil companies hardly miss the opportunity to make a profit. And last year was a spectacularly profitable one for the industry, not despite all the political troubles and natural disasters but apparently because of them.

Oil companies in the Philippines were not an exception. Last year, Petron Corp. reported an after-tax profit of P6.04 billion, up 76 percent from its net earnings of P3.42 billion in 2004. Pilipinas Shell, on the other hand, more than doubled its 2004 profit of P2.04 billion by netting P5.78 billion in 2005. The country's two oil refiners, which corner 67 percent of the market, thus turned in combined profits of P11.8 billion in 2005 or 88 percent more than what they earned the previous year.

Catanduanes Rep. Joseph Santiago said it was obvious that "soaring crude oil prices" were giving the local oil companies "a lot of leeway" to set pump prices at levels that allowed them to maximize their profits. Because of their "massive pricing power," he said the two oil refiners have been able to ensure for themselves "rapidly expanding margins." He urged the Department of Energy and the Department of Justice to activate the joint task force, created by the Downstream Oil Deregulation Law, to investigate "any report of an unreasonable rise in the prices of petroleum products."

When there is a tremendous increase in profits during a period of rapid—mostly upward—adjustment in prices, some very questionable increases must have happened. And when such things happen during a time when people are already reeling from high prices of goods, there must be more than just a suggestion of profiteering somewhere. So why has the administration not started looking into this? In particular, why has the joint DOE-DOJ task force not swung into action? If the task force cannot stuff something illegal and untoward in the financial reports of the oil companies showing their profits virtually doubling in a year's time, then the group is inutile and the law itself becomes useless.

It is not so if this is the first time government officials have heard about such excessive profits being earned by oil companies. Last February, President Macapagal-Arroyo told the oil companies to explain the increases in prices, following reports of record profits they had amassed. It seems nobody told her she was ordering the wrong party.

No alternatives

NOW TO ME IT HAS A MAJORITY, HOWEVER SMALL IT MAY be, the center-left must try to protect Italy. "Try," that is, because no one can hide the extreme difficulties related to the nature of the coalition that the ballot has selected. The center left must do this, however, by inappropriately the moderate forces and by resisting the weight of the extreme wings. But there aren't any alternatives. This is required, on one hand, by the rules of the democracy. Romano Prodi's coalition, even if it obtained a politically weak victory—became weak in the majority center—has beaten the center-right in any case. On the other hand, the country demands it: at the end of an intense (electoral) campaign, you cannot delay facing problems. It's up to the center left to demonstrate that it is capable of resolving them.

FOREIGN COMMENT

La Stampa (Milan, Italy)

'Nothin' like a dame'

VIEWPOINT

Jose L. Mercado

"I AM IN FAVOR OF WOMEN," COMMODORE Arthur Yancomb once declared with Italian panache. Filipinos also favor women, says an Asian Development Bank study. But they could do far more for them.

The Philippines has made significant progress in empowering women, reports the ADB. The recently ranked 63rd, based on indicators gauging inequalities between men and women, is 10 countries ahead of Japan.

The UNP Commission affirms women's equality with men. We've ratified international instruments like the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. And the Philippines is "one of the first republics to grant suffrage to women." Since May 1995, there have been more women than men (ten men, nine 21 percent of judges and 703,000 of the 1.4 million government employees are women.

"A little more curiously is what the world needs, said Isaacs Pestoni Spiegel," Sunday Times says women. Is this country exception?

"Some leaders are born women." The country elected Corazon Aquino President in 1986. It has been graced by million radiant ladies Delia Aquino, Quezon, our Teresita Santa Romana, Supreme Court Justice Cecilia Muñoz Palma, gold hunter Gloria Sosa and others. But then, there also are Imelda.

Today, the Philippines is the world's 12th most populous country. A third of the 85.3 million PH women average below poverty line.

Job sites are bombarded by "one of Asia's highest levels of income equality." The top 10 percent of the population controls 31 percent of the money pouch. And the poorest 20 percent makes do with four centavos. Only Cambodia and Laos have more underprivileged people than the Philippines. The rich have average income but the poor can only tighten belts further.

One consequence is more women leave. "The Philippines continues to have one of the highest maternal mortality rates in Southeast Asia, about four times that of Thailand and twice that of Vietnam."

In the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the number of mothers expiring at child birth is thrice more than that in Metro Manila. Other high-casualty regions are: Cagayan Valley, Eastern Visayas and Western and Northern Mindanao.

Yet, many of these deaths are preventable. For health services, our government spends about $10 per capita—pittiling compared to the $181 that Malaysia spends. "Quality of health services is the single most pressing issue," says the World Bank's "Filipino Report Card on Pro-Poor Services."

Women and infants bear the brunt of corruption and inefficiency in a government run chiefly by men, critics say. Of the top 9,981 decision-making official posts, 61 percent are occupied by men. "If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament," Hermes Remedy sarcastically notes.

Educational record is mixed. Regions where women lagged behind men in functional literacy are: Eastern and Western Visayas plus Northern and Southern Mindanao.

More women than men opt out from school than females. Male-dominated fields, such as the military and maritime professions, have taken in more women recently. This year, the Philippine Military Academy sets its largest number of women graduates. Women are significantly better learners in the education of men and women," the ADB said.

The problem crops up in the selection of specialized fields. Men gravitate professions that have yielded more higher paying jobs; women tend to choose are dominated by family-caring chores. Full-time women's income in 2003 was 30 percent lower than that of men. Was it learned Johnson who said bell "rather have a good dinner on the table than a well-educated daughter"?

The "job gap" finds three males for every two females in the labor force. "Women were denied as equal family workers." And nowadays, men tended to be higher for women.

Beyond the statistics, however, is the fact that the 'hot' pervasive "historical socles" which helps "many people narrow the gauge of poverty": cum-a-income or sub-contract workers, self-employed workers etc.

This social precedent "more than 50 percent of total employment in the country for the last 20 years," the International Labor Organization notes. "This estimate is highly underestimate. If all women's paid labor and unpaid housework were included, the proportion would be as high as 90 percent."

Thus, more women now seek alternative jobs abroad. The recent 3-percent growth in the number of OFWs "was largely fueled by the surge of female employment abroad . . . Much of this increase can be traced to Central Luzon and Mindanao."

While they earn more, women OFWs are vulnerable to being treated like doormats. "More than 100,000 cases of human rights violations involving overseas migrants, around the world, are reported annually."

Violence against women is also prevalent here. This ranges from widespread trafficking to domestic violence to sex tourism. "Cases are underreported and reliability of official figures is low," the ADB notes. "Trafficking in women and children is a big business. The UN estimates that trafficking is a $100 billion to $7 billion per year operation worldwide."

There's no shortage of policy programs and projects for Filipino women—e.g., microfinance, improvement of basic education and health, and combating trafficking. But officials must been empowered to be heard by the Constitution to guarantee their political share. They forgot what Senator Oscar Hammerstein II wrote for the musical "South Pacific": "There's nothin' like a dame."

* * *

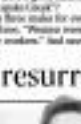
CORRECTION: My April 16 column erroneously mentioned a "Dante Ang" as one of the owners of former President Estrada. I was referring to "Cyrus Ear" of the stock market infamy. Dr. Cyrus Ang is the chairman of the Commission on Filipino Overseas. My apologies to Dr. Ang and my readers.

* * *

E-mail: jose_mercado@pldt.net.ph

Death and resurrection

THERE'S THE RUB



Conrado de Quiros

SOMEONE ASKED ME IN THE DEEPEST darkness of July (Pitch it? I had been tempted to give up on the country, too. Indeed, if I had not thought of leaving it at any time) replied after some reflection: Who hasn't been driven to do, spent or some point over the last many months or so, increased capacity to tolerate stupidity and willingness to grope blindly forward hoping to make progress? It's a code of delicacy that could sink the spirits of the most cheerful soul. But the intensity of despair here comes and goes, and I've always managed to glimpse tomorrow, or the end of death.

As to leaving this country, its equation has always been simple. The concept of my birth is not unlike democracy. It's a horrible place to live in, but all the rest, at least for me, are worse. I find it so much easier to scale down my physical needs than my spiritual ones, my need for creature comforts than my need for self respect.

My hope is by no means unfounded. The talent to be found among us is boundless, as evidenced by how well we've done abroad. We constantly get recognition to us, especially in music, and the sciences, notably in the many international Filipino have published here and abroad. The fact that we can be stupid, or are cursed by it. Our capacity for improvisation has few peers, a fact we've often used to look for shortcuts when simply taking the normal route is the easier thing to do. We're so impatient we become lazy, to do everything exactly the line. It is no great exaggeration to say if we could only channel our creativity to non-criminal activities, we could be one of the most prosperous nations of the world.

Down the last couple of weeks, where Thaksin Shinawatra resigned as prime minister of Thailand over corruption charges, in obedience to his King, I've been wondering what's made the Thais exceedingly prosperous and so recent leaps backward. As natural resources go, we had all the advantages there. I call remember here, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Thais considered themselves lucky to be able to study at the University of the Philippines, notably at Los Baños. A decade or so later, they were sending students over to the world. A decade or so later, we were importing rice from the world.

Doubtless, a great deal of what had us low was material loss. But many other Asian countries have lesser natural endowments, and progressed anyway. Doubtless, too, what has allowed Thailand to get far ahead in life were its varied and complex reasons. But pride is clearly one of them. A sense of right and wrong is clearly one of them. It's not true at all that you can make the economy set by thinking only about the economy. It's not true at all that you can prosper materially by thinking only about material things. A country doesn't have pride, it aren't get anywhere. A country doesn't have a sense of right and wrong, it won't move—never mind "move on."

I don't need to harp on pride, it's patent. That is the one thing Thais have in great abundance—see small thanks to King Bhumibol, who represents not only a living continuity between past and present but also the best that Thais can be—and the one thing we now lack most abundantly than food. It's a vicious cycle. We're under a national malice of "beggar's can not be choosers" because we're backward, and we're backward because we've made a virtue of habits of "beggar's cannot be choosers."

The sense of right and wrong, well, that became power with Thaksin resigning as prime minister in couple of weeks ago. If you need any more evidence to refute the idea that we can be get ahead in life you should forget about ethical strengthening and concentrate only on the economy, may just look at Thailand, Japan and Korea. In Japan and Korea in particular being accused of stealing the people's money is enough to make an official resign—not to speak of being convicted of so rape stealing the people's votes. It's no wonder they're prosperous. Poor, it's a certain no between prosperity and morality.

It is no accident that the words "moral" and "morale" are almost identical. A people's morality is the foundation of a people's morale. Its morals, its morale. It is conscience that makes people sacrificial, without its people suffering, and a people cannot show enthusiasm such a willingness to make sacrifices without justice. Plunging or the forgetting of it can never be the forcing force that makes a people rise beyond their selves to reach for things that lie beyond their grasp. Justice disappears and wrongdoing exists, you will not think of the country first, you will think of yourself first. Which is what's happening to us right now.

All we need is to recover break, all we need is a fresh start. There is talent and energy enough among us to push this country through. All we need is to unite behind what is good and decent, all we need is to be led by someone we can trust. All it takes is for us to rediscover our sense of pride and dignity, our sense of justice and self-worth—which we do when we're abroad—and we will doubtless become itself with our resplendence. All it takes is for us to rediscover our sense of justice, our capacity to call it what is evil and crude as what is good, and we will be beyond ourselves, quite literally thinking of country first before self.

And as surely as tomorrow flows from today, as surely as the sun rises in the east, as surely as we, survivors, hollow death, we will find our way out of this dark night.

A belated Happy Easter to everyone.

EU applauds commutation

MANY FEAR THE PHILIPPINE FOREIGN COUNTRY TO
Foreign minister President Rodrigo Duterte's plans for his
death penalty bill. Yesterday, the Palace revealed
to report a bill abolishing the death penalty
which was transmitted by Congress in 2004. Recently
present, the President, does both threats and issues
Among the Indian Senate and Senate Senate
members commission of the European Union, which
signed praise for his bill's abolished.

Recently, we had a guest a European friend who felt so happy your value he described as
DAVO, enlightened and courageous decision. He
told the minister the EU finds the entire plan for
European, it's easier be pursuing a strategy of one
taking a human life, they also believe than crimes
made ought to be given a chance to reform their
selves. He realized whether the death penalty is a
real deterrence to crime or not is a question. He
agreed with Palawan Rep. Abraham Kiram that
other drivers crimes in the arena of criminals and
will justice. GMA was merely being comm
ment. Her has brought life back the beginning.

I have readers, however, to hold in confidence
view on the issue. I believe that even hardened
criminals can reform, given spiritual and psycho
logical intervention. Some of them have become a
Third World country such as ours is different
from, say, in Scandinavian countries where peo
ple don't have to need to fend their families or go
against medical treatment. Even in these countries
are everywhere a poor country, whereas crimes in
offenses and so called criminals are driven more
by human problems. Also, prosecuting criminals
here is more difficult than in the Scandinavian system,
and so is rehabilitation, given the limited re
sources of government and society.

Once Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman to conduct
your again his "crusade against death" on this issue
my issue, as he did on the impeachment issue,
Lagman, one of the country's most decent private
advocates, is the House, says that if there's any
power of the President where the exercise of his

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Rodrigo Gilbert Cornelio Cornelio

exercise is "almost shocking." It's the power to grant clemency to felons. But he also points out to constitutional limitations: the President can not grant clemency to public officials convicted in impeachment; in the case of election offenses, it cannot be granted without the based and recommendation of the Commission on Elections. He also stressed that reprieves, commutations and pardons can only be granted after final judgment by the Supreme Court. Lagman, whose DAVO is never "absolutely commutation," he says there are "no constitutionally based" particularly about the basis for the exclusion of the penalty "indiscriminately applied to all convicted criminals." In other words, malfeasance.

Spokesperson de Rosario explained the Malacañang's position that the bill is a bold step only two days earlier, he opinion from Malacañang where he had a spokesman meeting with former Malacañang Drama Minister Salvador Medialdea, Senate President Aquilino Pimentel and the Senate Senate. Medialdea emphasized the theme of the parliamentary system be responsible not for Senators According to JDR he was entitled to say he didn't want to be a prisoner in Philippine internal affairs and only wanted to discuss respective of the bill, however, they the current fighting between the executive and the legislature is not political opinion but keep the Philippines from taking its rightful place in the sun. On the opposite side, the Senate is a parliamentary system that would be so short and tedious, Medialdea said the would be provided to the opposition. JDR points out that Singapore's former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew also would be something about the Philippines.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said the Senate is ready to pass the bill, but he also points out to constitutional limitations: the President can not grant clemency to public officials convicted in impeachment; in the case of election offenses, it cannot be granted without the based and recommendation of the Commission on Elections. He also stressed that reprieves, commutations and pardons can only be granted after final judgment by the Supreme Court. Lagman, whose DAVO is never "absolutely commutation," he says there are "no constitutionally based" particularly about the basis for the exclusion of the penalty "indiscriminately applied to all convicted criminals." In other words, malfeasance.

Senate Committee Chairman Gregorio Honasan, Senate President Aquilino Pimentel and Senate President Pro Tempore Manuel Villar Jr. Senate President Pro Tempore Manuel Villar Jr. Senate President Pro Tempore Manuel Villar Jr.

Rule of law and equality dead

THE ANTI-DEFIANCE BY Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez of the Supreme Court's order, directing her office to determine the criminal liability of persons involved in the P17 billion Mega Pacific eBusiness scandal illustrates her unwillingness to be independent.

"The Ombudsman has no duty to render reports on the status, criminal, administrative and civil liability of the investigation on the Columbia Mega Pacific eBusiness controversy," she was quoted as saying by the Inquirer. ("Ombudsman exempt from contempt—Gutierrez," PDI, 2/3/09) She claimed that as a constitutional office, the Ombudsman was "independent."

Maybe, when she claim was true, having been appointed by President Macapagal-Arroyo as Ombudsman, she is accountable only to the President. She is probably afraid that an investigation would point the responsibility for the scam directly to the Palace, to which she owes her high position.

It is also the duty of the President to "exercise the laws"—a duty she vowed to fulfill when she took her oath of office. Thus, the President must also order or request the Ombudsman to investigate the alleged irregularity and prosecute those who are found guilty.

But is Gutierrez's unexplained accusation vowed any suggestion that she investigate the matter a reflection of the Palace acquiescence? Is she playing her part in the pattern of cover-ups relating to the 2004 presidential elections—from the redrafting of the counting in Comelec, the mysterious "missing" tapes, the human repression by the House of the impeachment complaint, the suppression of freedom of expression and assembly through an emergency decree and a virtual curfew? Are with the President as commander-in-chief?

If so, then the rule of law and equality before justice are no more even certainty.

—CARMINA MAPOL
BF Homes, Parañaque City

LETTERS

What the country needs to focus on

SHARING BONHOMME MARCH 22 column brought to the fore a lot of points worth pondering. Foremost of these is the question why protest actions against President Macapagal-Arroyo have failed to draw the critical mass for successful people power. In this question we can combine some answers:

1. People have gotten sick and tired of mass action because such initiatives benefit only a few political leaders.

2. Opposition leaders don't seem to enough moral authority to rally people behind a cause. Where the arrogance and the screwed powers the entire moral order, when food is for sale will side with any of them?

3. The issue of election cheating is actually a non-issue as far as the majority of the people are concerned. Political fraud has always been part and parcel of our political landscape since the time of Ferdinand Eliptio Quezon. So, why worry about cheating except the manipulation?

It's high time that we pursued and identified the more pressing issue facing our country. It's not GMA definitely. It's our economic fraud. "It's the economy, stupid!" too remote the Clinton political war cry). What the country needs is the kind of leadership that will focus on economic ex a lot from poverty. Let's try to look ahead, right among our Asian neighbors and we cannot fail to see that all are swearing it out in the economic race. Leading the pack are China, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Singapore and Taiwan, but necessarily in that order. Like us, these countries are not free from political troubles, but they don't allow political issues to hinder their economic gain.

It's high time we gave our country a chance. Let's ban political records into economic philosophers and leaders down to the rank of regaining our once enviable place as Asia's economic tiger, second only to Japan in the 1960s.

Recently, despite all the political uproar, our economy has been able to chalk up some degree of growth and resurgence as shown by the appreciation of the peso and the increase in the price indices in the stock market. These are signs of economic health, not mistakes.

So why not make it the spring board for economic take-off? And we can do it. All that is needed is to lay aside endless political bickerings and focus on solving the economic problems of the country. That's our sure gateway to economic freedom.

—RODOLFO CALAPRE,
Manila City, Southern Leyte

Let's not give up on ADHD children

MY CHILD, DIAGNOSED BEING WITH Sun Belle College Antipolo (SBCA) since kindergarten, was denied re-enrollment in Grade 4 for school year 2006-2007, not for any serious infraction but because he has Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). My appreciation derives since this was made without prior consultation and supporting professional judgment...and he was, according to the vice principal, my child's advisor and some teachers were against his re-enrollment—but to no avail. Likewise, upon his a personal audience with his home Guidance, SBCA senior presidents, were turned down as he simply referred the matter back to the board.

Though with ADHD tendencies, my child is fully functional. He has stayed with his condition in SBCA through the patience and understanding of well-meaning teachers like his former guidance counselor and the previous principal. It is unfortunate that the current principal and board of administrators have chosen to ignore these great treatment efforts by arbitrarily singling out my child for non-admission despite the fact that there were other children with ADHD and worse behavioral problems in this school. If this is our determination, I do not know what to claim.

Worse, the owner, by his action or non-action, has shown indifference toward and complicity, also guilty to the plight of my child. He has paid more than a million pesos of hard earned money to send our children to that school and the owner could not even spare us his time. Perhaps, he would be happy to know that my child is devastated and, at a young age of 9, has been forced by their actions to deal with emotional trauma.

Let this be transcribed as a prejudiced lament of a parent lamenting what happened to his child, let his name that I have taught in settings as the same school for six years, and I have had a student with ADHD. I counsel him as a normal student while making adjustments to address his conditions and he passed my course considerably.

I hope this vital message will open the eyes of school authorities and government officials to the differences faced by the growing number of parents and children with ADHD, which for the record, is not a disease or an abnormality but a condition.

One of the coping mechanisms in dealing with this condition is to ensure a stable and normal environment, including that of the school. Acceptance is an important ingredient that would lead to the well-being of a child with ADHD. They need not be ostracized or punished or discriminated against for their condition. They do not need pity but understanding and patience. Children with ADHD do not need special schools but mainstreaming with interacting in a normal school environment.

Finally, may we address our concerns to any regulatory body governing school's welfare and discriminated matters.

—ARIES FRANCISCO LABIO,
LLB/Addl Sc.,
Camella Homes Cloverleaf,
Pilar Village, Las Piñas City

Sharing Aman with the world

CONSTANTINO TUIROS (PDI, 4/26/09) raises an pointer Aman's works, on exhibit at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, judge being young but exceptional artists like Aman in the forefront of the art scene. (PDI, 3/26/09)

We thank Tuiros and the trustees for sharing Aman with the world. We hope as mentioned above him in future inspiration articles.

By the way, the Theory of Relativity should be attributed to Einstein, not Bartels.

—JAGO QUAINO,
anglopaulo@yahoo.com

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Across the NATION

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Salon chain owner's resort opposed

FEAR

A woman who took part in a recent rally in Makati to oppose a hotel owner charging in the transitioning zone. The Reina Makarena is an annual event that draws tourists and visitors to the island province.

By Rinalie S. Rivera

HAIRSTYLIST RICKY REYES' LATEST STYLE OF development may not be the rave among fishermen in Calatagan, Batangas.

Leaders of the Bilusong Mangingisda overnight submitted documents and pictures to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources signifying their opposition to the planned expansion of Reyes' resort in Barangay 1, Calatagan, Batangas.

Eff national dash Supreme Mercado told Reyes was planning to develop the smallest area across the Golden Lotus Resort and has started construction of a wharf leading to it despite the absence of permits from the DENR.

Mercado said the privatization of the public domain would displace many fishermen who rely on the marine resources for living.

He said Reyes' proposed wharf, against would also affect the seaweed farm being managed by the women's leader and which has become an alternative source of livelihood for the fishing community.

Member of 33 barangays in Calatagan, an emerging tourist destination, are united villages where more than half of the population depend on the sea for a living.

Environmental lawyer Maria Fe Lasa, who is assisting the fishermen, said Reyes' planned resort on the smallest would be "nearly impossible" to build because of numerous legal restrictions which Reyes would have to hurdle.

Lasa said the RCC owned by Golden Lotus Resort was for the construction of the original resort and not the proposed development of the smallest.

"Whatever he does to the smallest and water, the starting a refund already, is a violation of the RCC," she said.

The DENR will send a team next week to conduct an ocular inspection of the development in Reyes' property and the nearby waters.

Reyes sought for numerous, Reyes synthesized plans to develop the smallest into a resort, but denied that any environmental damage of the proposed structures.

"We're just cleaning up the area. I will not move without the legal sanction," Reyes told the inquirer in a phone interview yesterday.

Lasa said the swimming planned Ex development by Reyes was a dangerous area, a feeding ground of the endangered marine turtle and dugong.

Reyes, however, said that the barangay council has already passed a resolution supporting the expansion.

ROUNDUP

Illegally caught fish seized

DAVAO CITY—Police and environmentalists intercepted 22 boxes of illegally caught fish during the Bakakalan Highway on April 18. Police said they also arrested some persons in a coordinated check (Office of the Regional Director PNP-CIV) at a checkpoint in Barangay Talomo, Panglao town. Police identified Santos Sinap, Fernando Jumalon and Rey Alfonso of arrested fish came from Pamanda, Carmelotan Banda, Davao.

PHILIP ROBERTA, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

MPA leader held

CAMP NORTH LIM, Laguna—Police intelligence agents in Batangas arrested an alleged high-ranking leader of the New People's Army in Mabini Pisay, Batangas City, Thursday Batangas City on April 6. The suspect, Dionisio Ambrosio, is allegedly an NPA leader in Southern Tagalog and Bicol region of a guerrilla unit under the Eduardo Dagli Command, police said. The arrest of Ambrosio was secured by a warrant issued by the Municipal Trial Court of Mabini, Batangas.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Cop shoots boss, self

NUEVA MERCEDES, Isabela—A policeman killed himself after he shot and killed the chief of the town's police on April 18, reports said. SPO2 Ricardo Pilar, who was drunk, took his police station leading for his superior, Insp. Nicanor Balagtang, at about 11:30 p.m. in public and then offset, reports said. Pilar had been reprimanded by Balagtang for his failure to respond for duty the previous week. After Balagtang went out of his office, he again complained Pilar was drunk and he is further reprimand, reports said. It was at the instance when Pilar and Balagtang were both inside a police headquarters. Pilar went home, got a .38 caliber pistol and returned and shot Balagtang.

Alfonso Ulpa Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Money lender slain

CEBU, Bohol—A money lender was reportedly killed by two men in a drive-by shooting in Barangay Cabagnan, Tagbilaran City, Bohol, on April 18. Victim Antonio Cortejo, 70, was shot in the head, neck and chest, reports said. Witnesses said the victim was on his way home when he was shot by two men who were riding a motorcycle. Cortejo died on the spot. Police said the victim's wife, Nanette Cortejo, 50, was also shot in the head and chest. Cortejo was rushed to the Bohol Provincial Hospital in Tagbilaran City, where she was pronounced dead on arrival. Police said the victim's wife was also a money lender.

Jing Hernandez, PDI Central Luzon Bureau

Worker burned alive

CAMP NORTH LIM, Laguna—A construction worker died after being doused with gasoline before being set ablaze by a construction site in Lucban, Tayabas City, on Monday afternoon, Sept. Manuel Nitu, Tayabas police said, identified the victim as Oliver Mojica, 31, of Barangay Lucban, Tayabas City. Nitu said the victim was working at the construction site of Dr. Reyes General Hospital on Mabini Avenue in Barangay. Witnesses saw two persons of the construction site of the hospital allegedly doused the victim and started the death and burned under the victim.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Freak tornado causes panic

LUCBAN CITY—A freak tornado suddenly swept through parts of Lucban, Quezon, on Friday afternoon, April 18, causing panic among residents.

The city municipal chief said the tornado lasted for about 20 minutes. Damage was reported in the Barangay Tayabas, Lucban, Quezon, Tayabas, Lucban, Quezon, Tayabas, Lucban, Quezon,

Gunmen attack Cotabato village; hundreds flee

MEDIAVILLA NORTH COTABATO—HUNDREDS of villagers fled their homes after about 50 armed men attacked Barangay Tupal here yesterday.

The attack came three days after three members of the Liberation Front (MILF) mortarmen killed the barangay chief, Tolong Pakalon, a former MILF field commander.

Witnesses saw the second village chief murdered in North Cotabato—on the past five days.

The evacuees, mostly women and children, are now hospitalized at a multipurpose building in Barangay Bito.

Major Romeo Acurza said the armed men were Pakalon's mobile phone and 40-cal. pistol. They claimed "mission accomplished" after killing Pakalon.

The old man had just finished dinner in nearby Mudtang when his wife fled to the village chief.

Dimling Alibamen's secretary, Antonio said Pakalon was wondering a little at the gunmen when the women approached him and opened fire.

Supt. Chino Bandoquin, Midsayap police chief, said he victim and his assailants might have had a misunderstanding in the past. He did not elaborate.

According to MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu, Pakalon had still sympathized with the MILF even despite his surrender in the late 1990s.

He said he did not know of any involved in previous misunderstandings with other armed groups operating in villages of Midsayap.

Four days earlier, unidentified men shot dead Rodrigo Lumang, of Barangay Bulacan in Pikit town.

Police said Lumang had just emerged from the town's public market and was about to board his motorcycle when he was shot.

Gen. Raymundo Pilad has directed the Pikit and Midsayap police to speed up the investigation, identify the suspects and file charges against them in court.

Kabalu said the killing of Pakalon could have been an offshoot of a long-standing feud with armed groups in the border area of Midsayap in North Cotabato and Gen. Santos in Maguindanao.

Kabalu said the MILF leadership had sent emissaries to the villages "to pacify warring leaders."

At about 8 a.m. yesterday, about 40 armed men believed to be led by Commander Daniel Mangal, attacked Tupal.

Two persons, identified as Jamila Dagbal who is city security program, and Lupo Pino, were wounded.

Soldiers of the army's 36th Infantry Battalion are pursuing Commander Mangal, a renegade MILF fighter, and about 50 followers.

Gunfight broke out at about 8 a.m. as the armed men approached the municipal of Magpalocloc.

Speaking over radio station dzMM, Kabalu insisted MILF fighters in the area not to get involved in the skirmishes to avoid clashes with government forces.

Edwin Fernando, PDI Mindanao Bureau

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

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SUMMER BREW PHOTO BY JOY DONGUINES FOR PDI

An old hot tendoor vendor sells ice tea to passers-by on a street in Bagabag, Nueva Vizcaya to market a drink sold "halo" juice, a favorite drink of motorists during the hot, dry months.

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The new EOS 30D, Canon's versatile digital SLR camera

SINGAPORE—Canon recently announced the arrival of the new EOS 30D, a highly versatile 8.2-megapixel digital SLR that is the widely anticipated successor to the Canon EOS 20D. Incorporating many of the latest state-of-the-art technologies, the Canon EOS 30D has been equipped with a touch interface, intuitive and enhanced control to meet human factors design to provide a unified solution for professional and advanced amateur photographers, as well as video photographers, and advanced amateurs looking to upgrade to a more powerful digital SLR. The Canon EOS 30D is suitable for a wide variety of shooting situations.

The Canon EOS 30D features an 8.2 megapixel CMOS sensor. Canon's advanced CMOS imaging processor and an optical low pass filter is a 3-layer configuration for superb product-grade quality imaging. Other features have either been introduced or improved, including the imaging sensor, durable shutter that is now rated to 100,000 cycles and a dust-resistant body of unity. Canon's EOS 30D is also ready to handle transmission of RAW data directly to computer, or to work with data stored in memory cards.

Canon EOS is aimed at professionals over the world and at the enthusiastic amateur in digital photography and imaging. Canon's EOS 30D, Canon's digital SLR being the successor to the immensely popular digital SLR, is a powerful digital photographic tool. Photographers will appreciate and enjoy how the complete EOS system of lenses and accessories expand their imaging efforts, covering every conceivable requirement and meeting their every need.

Superb Images & Fast Camera Operation

The second generation APS-C size 8.2-Megapixel CMOS sensor, developed and manufactured by Canon, provides 2.1 million effective pixels (3.5 Megapixels) 1.5 times enlargement. It delivers high-quality images in many intuitive ways to be enjoyed directly on the CMOS sensor for stunning, dynamic images. The sensor provides clear, sharp, high-definition images of electronic noise, a notable accomplishment for a digital camera. The sensor also, sharp, high-definition images. The image of EOS speed of 5.6 (f/5.6) is included. A 100% coverage of the viewing angle differentiated sensitivity.

Canon's proprietary CMOS & imaging processor enables sharp high-speed processing and high-speed. Canon algorithm to produce sharp, high-quality images with minimal noise. Other features include a dust-resistant body. In addition, 100,000 A features from previous models, which are now rated to 100,000 cycles, and a shutter speed of 1/8 to 30 seconds. High-speed serial burst shooting speed of 5.6 fps (with continuous shooting) and burst buffer capacity of up to 11 images (JPEG/Tiff/Raw) and 10 frames (RAW/Tiff/Raw). EOS 30D is highly efficient in terms of energy consumption. Also, shooting is possible with a single battery and long-term images on a single battery charge.

Fast-operating Subsystems

An introduction to feedback from users of previous Canon EOS digital SLRs, a complete system of improvements has been incorporated into the Canon EOS 30D. A long-anticipated optimizing function, which is now available after improvements to the optical engine and the EOS 30D Exposure & metering system. Evaluative, Partial, Center-weighted average, and Spot metering. To be sure to feedback from users of previous Canon EOS digital SLRs, a complete system of improvements has been incorporated into the Canon EOS 30D. A long-anticipated optimizing function, which is now available after improvements to the optical engine and the EOS 30D Exposure & metering system. Evaluative, Partial, Center-weighted average, and Spot metering. To be sure to [illegible]

Pictures Style

The Pictures Style function provides different types of film, allowing the photographer to enhance the optimum image quality, make specific shooting conditions. Pictures Style can be adjusted to six different modes, including Standard, Portrait, Landscape, Neutral, Faithful, and Monochrome. Pictures Styles, using settings with normally different camera functions, enable the photographer to create a wide variety of different effects with adjustable sharpness, contrast, saturation and color tone.

Making it Yes Looking

New Lenses

Canon is widely recognized as a leading manufacturer of photographic equipment with over 70 years of history. For such, many of the Canon EOS 30D can look forward to expanding their creative options with the full EOS system of lenses and accessories, to meet the EF mount.

In conjunction with a wide range of EOS lenses, Canon has released two new high performance lenses. The long-awaited EF 70mm/F2.8 L IS USM is a medium telephoto lens equipped with professional and enhanced amateur zoom looking for those who have [illegible] Canon's image stabilizer. Part of Canon's "L series" lenses, the EF 70mm/F2.8 L IS USM guarantees optimum image quality.

The other lens released is the EF 8-15 70mm/F2.8 USM, a large aperture ultra-wide zoom lens that is designed specifically for professional photographers. The large aperture ultra-wide zoom lens, combined with high-speed shooting capabilities and a wide-angle lens, is a powerful tool for capturing dynamic images. The lens provides image stabilization, a feature unique to Canon's EF lens series, and a [illegible] Canon's image stabilizer. The lens provides image stabilization, a feature unique to Canon's EF lens series, and a [illegible] Canon's image stabilizer.

Printing & Connectivity

The Canon EOS 30D's PictBridge compatible for camera-direct printing and Bubble USB 2.0 Hi-Speed connectivity. Canon's EOS 30D is equipped with a compatible Canon Pro-Series printer, a full range of enhanced functions, including Canon's exclusive Photo Print Wizard, [illegible] available cards. To change camera [illegible] printing, Full information [illegible] Canon EOS 30D's PictBridge [illegible] of additional paper sizes and [illegible] Nonetheless, PictBridge's [illegible] Canon's Pro-Series printers. [illegible] Canon's EOS 30D also comes with the ability to print using the camera's color characteristics, with the [illegible] function for the printer.

Canon Marketing (Philippines), Inc. [illegible]

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Tutor-parents, top pupils share honors

By John B. Aglay
Tiwi, Albay

OUTSTANDING PUPILS WERE NOT THE ONLY ones who were given recognition when public elementary schools in Tiwi town in Albay held their graduation rites early this month.

Parents, who served as reading tutors to Grade 1 pupils, also went onstage to be honored for their participation in a reading proficiency program "Sa Bagbag, May Pag-asa" (In Reading, There is Hope).

The local school board, headed by Municipal Jaime Villanueva, initiated the program as the count of school year 2005-06.

Certificates were given to the volunteer parents for the vital role they performed in the successful implementation of the program, nonetheless to Josefina Ebalo, a retired schools district supervisor who was named project coordinator.

Volunteers

Hilda Campomanes, 33, a municipal employee, was one of those who tutored 18 pupils of Section 4 at the Cale Elementary School.

She had simple "mainly reading and drill-and-learn," from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., Mondays to Fridays.

"At least I was able to make use of my profession," said Campomanes, who took an Education course in college. Her child is enrolled in Grade 2 at the same school.

She said she was happy to be part of the school's teaching staff. Teaching is an obligation to her pupils because she's also a parent, she said.

Shelie Geralde, 32, of Barangay Naga, tutored four pupils of Section 2 at the Naga Elementary School, from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m., every Thursday.

A casual employee of the municipal government and graduate of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Geralde devoted extra time to teach before finishing her child who was in Section 1.

"I find my teaching time difficult as it is not within my line of profession. Later, I learned to enjoy it even if we were just given compensation for our services," she said.

Independent readers

A total of 1,110 parents, most of them college graduates, passed the screening for the novel reading program. They underwent seminars and training, said local schools district supervisor Evelyn Umali.

They viewed the schools near their residences, teaching during "vacant" periods, such as recess, lunch break or after classes.

"Some of them share 30 minutes a day or one hour a week to tutor a group of three to five pupils," Umali said.

Flavio Umali's colleague and partner in the project, said that since the tutoring sessions began five months ago, the Grade 1 pupils had shown improvement in reading proficiency.

Before the end of the school year in June last year, 1,701 Grade 1 pupils were considered nonreaders. By March 13, the figure dropped to only 202, Nicolas said.

A total of 1,129 (63 percent of the original number) became independent readers, 273 were "instructional readers," and 278 were on the "frustration level."

"Instructional readers are those who can read upon the direction of the teachers, while those in the frustration level can read but have no comprehension," said Flavio.

School board

The reading program was spurred by the municipality's efforts to recognize its local school board (LSB).

In the current eight voting members, eight more "non-voting" members were added in lieu the expanded local school board (ELSB).

Under the Local Government Code of 1990 or Republic Act No. 7160, the budget requirements of public schools within the municipality are handled by the LSB. The mayor and the Department of Education's schools district supervisor serve as co-chairs.

Last year, Mayor Villanueva approved the ELSB to include representatives from the Liga ng mga Barangay, Federal Philippines Inc., Polish Social Action Commission (PSAC) of the San Lorenzo de Mercyes Parish, National Power Corp., Bicol Secondary Education, and the religious, media and academic sectors.

Villanueva believed that the collaborative efforts were essential in upgrading the literacy of public schoolchildren in the town.

Last year, only 200 of the more than 800 nonreaders qualified for first year in the public high school, he noted.

"I'm not doubtful that the competency of the high school freshmen was comparable only to a Grade-4 pupil," Villanueva said.

It also convinced the dismal performance of the nonreaders to their low scores in Reading and English.

"Independent readers are those who can understand what they read (comprehend) — less than 20 percent," the mayor said.

PARENTS attend the "Mayon Ha, Maestro Pa" program for volunteer reading tutors in Tiwi, Albay. JOHN B. AGLAY

Resources

After the creation of the ELSB, the municipal government held a total of 23 meetings. Four public consultations were held in March and July last year, followed by an "education summit" on Aug. 6.

As a result of the series of conferences, the board crafted a five-year education reform plan that are the stage for the resources and pioneering reading project.

The local education specialists said they applied the "synergize" principle to set improvements in reading comprehension in the basic education curriculum.

"This simply means that the community members are committed to helping each other and combining all of their resources to ensure the smooth flow and success of the reading scheme," said Flavio.

In September, the program kicked off with a series of training sessions sponsored by the ELSB, including a three-day training for Grade 1 teachers and school heads, and an English proficiency test administered to Grade 1 teachers.

Workbooks

All school principals in the district were sent for training.

Umali, which operates and maintains the town's geothermal energy resource, committed itself to put in P1.1 million in the program, while the local government contributed P400,000 from its annual budget.

The PSAC pledged to take care of the disbursements and operating expenses.

The board allocated funds for the reproduction of English and Reading workbooks adopted from the Bicolano Guidance Schools Division. A royalty fee of P8 was paid for each workbook intended for a 1:1 distribution ratio to the pupils.

Dozen tomes have been uploaded in every school for the nonreaders in the "Magsayang na Maestro" (Fiesta as Teachers) component of the reading program.

The other parents were trained to become home tutors so they could follow up the reading lessons of their children in class.

The program is now in full swing in the 23 elementary schools in Tiwi's 23 villages and there is no stopping the "synergy" harnessed from each and every community member.

In the coming years, Villanueva has vowed to put up village reading corners, especially for teenagers.

Colombia mission still fresh to Tabaco priest

By Gil Francis G. Acorda
Tabaco City

FOR ALMOST 25 YEARS, HE HAD WORKED AS A missionary in Colombia, one of the first two Filipino—and Asian—priests assigned by the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) to the South American country during its more troubled times.

But Fr. Noel Belmonte, who is nearing 51 this year, had to come back home to Tabaco City in Albay, not only to be with his ailing parents, other relatives and friends, but also to spend his remaining years of service to preach the Gospel among the poor.

Belmonte was appointed chaplain of the Divine Word College of Legazpi City early this year.

It was not easy easy for him to leave Colombia after performing most of his priestly duties in two rural areas there. He was chosen, along with fellow Mariano priest Armando Farrerol of Gubat, Sorsogon, to go to Bogota, the capital, on Aug. 15, 1980. Other priests headed for Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Ecuador and Panama.

Assimilation

At first, Belmonte feared that Roman Catholic Latin Americans would find it difficult to accept an Asian priest. But with his fellowship of their language and with their warm hospitality and religiosity, he easily blended in the community. Instantly, he regarded the place as an extended home.

"Somehow I felt like I was in my own country, for people there have the same passion in how God and are very warm to visitors and neighbors. It was funny, though, for I was always mistaken for a Chinese," he recalled.

During his early years in Bogota, Belmonte said he was shocked at the "culture of death" in Colombia, which was then swept by political unrest.

It was the period of drug cartels and social revolution. Political killings and uprisings were everywhere, Belmonte said, and the Church and its followers were under extreme duress.

"My main mission in the rural areas of Bogota and the neighboring province of Medellin was to preach the beauty of the culture of life and living for Christ. I asked God I feared sins for my life," the priest confessed.

Belmonte said it was necessary for him to relocate across the streets—and of course, the corpses of children killed by land mines and caught in the crossfire between the government and militia forces.

"I thought they would kill us, that would the culture of fear and death, many Colombians still believed in the value of life and that gave me more hope to continue inspiring the people to proclaim life in the face of near death," Belmonte said.

Amid the strife, he was homesick, too, he said. But he wholeheartedly accepted the fact that it would not be that easy to leave his parishioners, he said, the people badly needed his courage and faith.

Preaching

Belmonte said it would not be very easy for him to enter his new mission. He said he had to relearn the Filipino culture so he could effectively help and guide the youth.

"But one thing never changed though—I have always had the Filipino's spirituality and faith in God, which is the very noble character trait we have that the world continuously look up to," he said.

Born on Dec. 12, 1955, the workaholic priest said he never dreamt to become a priest or be chosen to go to troubled Colombia in the early '80s.

He said he wanted to become a doctor. He was a nurses (albay boy) in their parish in Barangay San Antonio and attended high school at the St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Barangay Busac. But he really never thought there would lead to priesthood.

The calling came after two years in college, when he was inspired by the SVD's philosophy on the image of a priest as the "main instrument in spreading the word of God, for the world in their parish."

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Aplus METRO
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

WANTED: Including after an arrest warrant was issued against her in July 2005. The kidnap victim's family has offered a P150,000 reward for information on her whereabouts. [illegible]

DOJ junks Wang appeal

No reversal for alleged Roldan accomplice

By Armand M. Macaso

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (DOJ) [illegible] there was an appeal by Jeanette Wang, who had been implicated in the alleged kidnapping of a boy but was, in drop the case against her, a move that appears to have sealed her fate as a principal accused in the crime.

In consideration, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said that "after having carefully examined the record, we found that the investigating prosecutors committed no grave abuse of discretion that would justify a reversal of the assailed resolution." Wang had been charged with the kidnapping of a three-year-old Chinese-Filipino boy, along with her alleged boyfriend, former Pasig Dennis Roldan (Mitchell Tomelden in real life), and by demanding P250 million for the victim's freedom. Wang had claimed the evidence against her was weak.

The boy was abducted in February last year while on his way to school. He was rescued by a Presidential Anti-Crime Emergency Response team after 11 days of captivity.

Also facing charges were alleged accomplices, Jeferson Garcia, Benjoe Ocejado, Rowena Ferrals, Shelina Andres, Alberto Pangaguan and Salvio Remigio.

What's Inside

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Manila cops learn art of interview /A18
What's in store for Earth Day /A18

MetroBriefs

Seminar for cops

A 200-SAT seminar will be held this Saturday at the Manila Police Academy to improve the communication skills of policemen and boost their image. "Most policemen are really interrogated as martinetes," said lawyer Genaro Gonzales Sy, chairman of the Manila Bar Association's training institute which will conduct the seminar. "With better interpersonal skills, the policemen could be more effective in getting police done," he added. A total of 40 city, municipal station police officials will attend the seminar. Chief Chinese Management and Media Relations Bear Ocelis II with Flying Colors," where they will be taught basic mass communication concepts and public speaking skills. "The seminar is important because the police are expected to handle a lot of interviews and investigations as part of their duty, media is providing information and conducting interviews to the public," Lucanas Ching, Japanese consultant chief said. "Manila policemen should develop their skills in crisis management and media relations to prevent them from being misquoted or misunderstood during interviews," he added.

Megan C. Ortiz

Borje writes '10'

FORMER publisher author David (Dave) Borje, a man critical of the Arroyo administration, died March, died Monday. He was 67. Borje, who served Congress and Malacañang during his more than 40 years as a reporter in various news organizations, died in his home in Makati. He is survived by his wife Paula, children Ilona, Faith and Rubio Mascato, Aldric and Gian A., Mario and Carol, Dario and Evelyn, grandchildren Samantha, Anna, Patricia, Joshua, Patrick and Julia. He remains lie at the Central United Methodist church on 138 Roles Street, Manila. Interment is on Sunday, April 23, at the Manila Memorial Park in Sucat after the two religious services at 2 p.m.

24 videoke bars padlocked in Taguig

TIRE POWER
A Hyundai Grace van crumpled like a toy car after part of an old acacia tree fell on it in front of the Ninoy Aquino Sports Stadium in Pitc-Cruz, Manila. No one was hurt as the van was empty.

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE POLICE CLOSED DOWN 24 videoke bars in Taguig City on Monday night for operating without permits.

City police chief Supt. Alfred Corpus said his men served closure orders on the owners of the bars after Mayor Freddie Tinga received complaints from residents who lived near the establishments.

According to the complaints, the bars, located in Barangay Western Bicutan and Maharlika, were also illegally used as venues for prostitution.

Corpus said signs were put up outside the videoke bars to inform the public that the establishments were closed for violating ordinance or Republic Act 7160.

"The operation is (also) part of the anti-crime prevention program of the city government and police as we intensify our peace and order campaign in the city," the police official said in a statement.

He added that based on their records, crimes like homicide and physical injuries often occurred after or during drinking spores in pubs and other nightspots.

Tinga, meanwhile, warned of more closures after a check on the status of all nightspots in the city revealed that many were operating without the necessary permits.

Two-day fair set in QC to celebrate Earth Day

A SIGH, "SAMUT SAR 2006," will be held on April 21-22 at the National Biology Center on East Avenue, Quezon City to mark Earth Day.

The two-day event will feature stalls stocked with healthy food, eco-friendly products, information on green technologies, eco-tourism and earth-friendly demonstrations. Visitors can also see the four-hectare mini park's picnic grounds. Alexandrite, The Resource Center and Development of Natural Resources headed by Leonardo Camacho will also mark Earth Day on Saturday in Hidondong with President Macapagal-Arroyo as guest speaker.

Mother, baby boy killed in Tondo fire

By Maryann C. Ortiz and Jocelyn R. Uy

A WOMAN AND HER 4-MONTH-old baby were killed in a fire that razed a residential area in Tondo, Manila yesterday afternoon.

Arson probers said Daisy Maquiso, 23, and Baby Andoni died of suffocation and burns.

Investigation showed that the fire began at 3:10 p.m. in Maquiso's house at 481-C Pedro Street, trapping both mother and baby inside.

The fire was put out at 3:27 p.m. Fire probers said the fire affected 23 other homes.

Earlier in the day, another fire razed a three-story house owned by Ray Tan on Geronimo Street, Sampaloc, also in Manila.

Fire officials said the fire began at around 9:45 a.m. at the third floor of the house and was declared under control at 10:17 a.m. Investigators had yet to determine the cause of the fire.

On Tuesday afternoon, a fire broke out in Pandacan City, leaving a man identified as Michael Tandoy with minor injuries.

The fire broke out on the second floor of a two-story commercial-residential building at 628 Quintos Avenue in Barangay Don Galo. The building was owned by Felicita Ty, said fire investigator SFO2 Felipe Taguing in his report.

Minutes per set the fire, which began at 5:38 p.m., 30 minutes later, before it could spread to other parts of the building.

Investigators said the fire could have been caused by a faulty wiring.

Of thieves and welshers

FORMER PRESIDENT ERAP TURNED 69 yesterday.

At the rate the ousted Chief Executive has been doing his body (drinking, smoke or gambling binges that lasted two-the-not hours of the morning), he should consider himself lucky that he still survived above.

His remaining days on earth can be considered a bonus.

* * *

Here's a piece of unsolicited advice to Sen. Bongoy Revilla: Stop abusing your body the many years Erap did his.

The young Bongoy should know his father Erap has a stronger constitution than he.

Bongoy's weak body has resulted in his collapsing due to exhaustion during production stint due to a university in Northern Luzon where he was guest of honor.

According to persons who know Bongoy, he frequently drinks and gambles with his buddies. His unhealthy ways have affected his work at the Senate.

That's why he looks like a kalapugong payat in house that lacks dengg every time he's interviewed on TV.

Baka di ka tumagal, Mr. Senator, if you don't mend your ways.

* * *

Dante Jimenez, chair of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption, says many victims or relatives of victims of heinous crimes

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

threaten to employ "judicial shortcuts" by hacking the perpetrators killed inside the New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) in Muntinlupa.

This was their reaction to the recommendation to the implementation of prisoners scheduled for lethal injections.

Vendetta killings inside the national penitentiary would be difficult under Corrections director Nicanor Manalo and NBP supt. Jaime Leopando. The two know NBP and down inside-out.

Manalo is a two-time director of the Bureau of Corrections (formerly Bureau of Prisons) while Leopando is a career prison official, having started as a guard.

But given the Filipino's lack of faith in the country's judicial system, vendetta killings outside prison walls will surely go with President Macapagal-Arroyo's orders practically abolishing the death penalty.

Extra-judicial executions—called "salvaging" in police parlance—of hardened and unremorseful criminals will multiply.

Filipinos have a penchant for taking the law into their hands. Look at the people of the cities of Davao and Cebu who rejoice in every death of a criminal at the hands of vigilantes.

The President has only restarted the crime situation with her controversial order.

* * *

The government's "study now, pay later" plan for poor students has been scrapped because its beneficiaries don't pay when they've found work after graduation.

So, what are the chances of the administration argument in this space (April 11) that Filipinos don't pay their debts.

Ask the banks that lend money. Ask the hallow money-lenders who have a hard time collecting from debtors. Ask people who lent money to their neighbors who cannot begging to pay back the money lent because the due date of payment.

We're a nation full of mamaniks (welshers).

And thieves, too. If you leave your bag in a taxicab, expect it to be returned to you to some in a million chances.

There are very, very few honest cabbies and others who do not offer the public.

That's why when a cabbie cleaner returns a bag left by a passenger inside an airport toilet, he or she becomes a hero and an instant celebrity. This goes to show that we lack honesty in this country.

We're a nation of mamaniks.

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Hamas-led government fights for survival

JERUSALEM—RTV TURKU news, in office, the Hamas-led Palestinian government is fighting for survival and seeking a coalition with other factions to draw up support, warning the administration's collapse could spark violence.

Some Palestinian officials and analysts predict the government might hold within months if international political isolation and financial pressures persist.

These pressures are likely to escalate after the new government defended a Palestinian suicide bombing in the Israeli city of Tel Aviv on Monday that killed nine people.

Hamas is sworn to attack democracies but has largely abided by a cease-fire ceasefire.

"I can't say there are plans to face the situation but the collapse of the Palestinian Authority would mean uncontrolled chaos and violence," Majed Al-Haidy, Hamas minister of Religious Affairs, told Reuters.

Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh on Friday said the consequences of bringing down the government would be grave, but added the administration would not fall.

Hamas is fighting challenges on different.

It has inherited $1.5 billion in debt. Israel has cut off $55 million in monthly tax transfers while the United States, Europe and other countries have cut aid to the government unless it recognizes the Jewish state and disarms.

Foreign now unpaid government salaries are forming.

Banks are refusing to deal with the Palestinian Authority, forcing businesses to the United States which has prohibited any commercial dealings with the Hamas government.

Some analysts said Hamas had two options to halt a humanitarian crisis: recognize Israel or stop suicide and allow President Mahmoud Abbas, a moderate who favors a two-state solution to the conflict, to form a new government.

"Hamas is not officially admitting its failure ... but it has discovered it can't run things alone and to prompt a popular backlash, it is appealing to others to share this responsibility," said Palestinian analyst Mehdi Abdel-Hadi.

On Sunday Haniyeh held talks with a senior chief Palestinian Fatah to try to persuade them to join the government.

All factions of the umbrella Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had previously refused to join, partly due to disagreements on political programs.

Abdel-Hadi said to form a coalition with PLO groups, Hamas would have to recognize the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians and accept a two-state solution.

Hamas insists it will not bow to pressure to recognize Israel and renounce violence.

Israel's unremitted artillery barrages of Gaza, in response to militant under fire, and Monday's suicide bombing by the Islamic Jihad group, have added to the dilemma for Hamas.

"Hamas has said it would not go on militants carrying out assaults against Israel. But it has come in for criticism from some groups for failing to stop attacks.

Abbas's condemnation of the suicide bombing and Hamas's defiance was also likely to spark a confrontation between the president and the Hamas cabinet, analysts said.

In a speech on Friday, Haniyeh accused Abbas of stripping him of his powers.

"If this situation continues, I believe things are moving towards a confrontation between Hamas ministers," said Imad Falouji, a former minister and former Hamas official.

Political analyst Hassan Abdel questioned whether Hamas would govern beyond a couple of months. The Hamas finance minister has already warned of economic collapse within months unless aid flows back into empty Palestinian coffers.

"Without salaries people may stop going to work, institutions could collapse and services stop. People would go to the streets to battle. It could be violent," Abdel said.

Hamas has been taken aback by world reaction toward their assumption of power after trounching Abbas's Fatah faction in January elections. Some Muslim supporters have promised to make up the aid shortfall, but amounts pledged have been small.

"We were surprised by the European position in particular, we thought they would give us a chance and that deal with us," senior Hamas official said Reuters.

Hamas has hinted at accepting a two-state solution, although Arab diplomats and analysts say Hamas could not make such a decision without causing splits within the militant group itself and its mother movement, the Muslim Brotherhood. Reuters

Film recreates flight of hijacked 9/11 plane

NEW YORK—A FILM ABOUT THE HIJACKED phone that crashed in Pennsylvania has raised questions about whether Americans are ready for Hollywood's take on the Sept. 11 attacks, but some relatives of those who died support "United 93."

The film, which premiers at the Tribeca Film Festival next week, recreates the flight in actual time, from takeoff to the hijacking to the crash. It is intuitive to emotional and over the trailer prompted New York City theater to pull the advertisement because of negative reactions from customers.

But Peggy Beamer, whose son Todd Beamer died on United flight 93, said that while she found the movie difficult to watch, it was an important story to tell.

"I think the timing is very good," she said on Tuesday at a New York press event for the Universal Pictures film. "If it had been one or two years after Sept. 11, it would have been much more difficult."

Gordon Pell, who lost his brother Edward, said the movie studio had promised to donate 10 percent of box-office takings from the opening weekend to a fund to create a memorial for those who died on that flight.

"I don't think they're profiteering on our story," he said, adding that the business of movie companies was to make money.

The producers spent hours talking to the families to produce a movie that would be approved by the families of those who died on the plane during the hijack.

Director Paul Greengrass created a mock up of the plane and filmed the scenes improvising what they imagined might have happened, guided by phone conversations that many passengers made and by transcripts of flight recordings.

The film starts with a voice in studio reading from the Koran and the first few minutes show the hijackers praying in a hotel room before they go to the airport.

The tension builds slowly until long, drawn out scenes of mundane preparations for the flight—passengers calling home, flight attendants chatting, hijackers loaded on the plane.

The coup of United 93 is portrayed by the instinctive of what is happening at air traffic control centers tracking United 93 and the other hijacked planes—two of which crashed into the World Trade Center and another into the Pentagon.

In the final scene the passengers try to overcome the hijackers and the plane hurtles downwards.

"To me the job of Cloe film is to ... create a responsible, mature, reasonable narrative of those events to see what it tells us about where we are today," said Greengrass, director of the action movie "The Bourne Supremacy" and "Bloody Sunday" about one of the most controversial events in Northern Ireland's troubles. Reuters

Floods threaten 160,000 in southeastern Europe

BELGRADE—A SWOLLEN THIRSTY of the River Danube rose to record levels in Hungary and Serbia on Tuesday, threatening at least 160,000 people and 50,000 homes in southeastern Europe hit by worst disaster floods.

Emergency crews scrambled to bolster the banks of the Tisza River near Szeged, 170 km (105 miles) southeast of Budapest, where the river is in peril of the two-mile-wide River Danube, which is expected to hit its peak level in parts of the two-mile-wide Danube hit by the flooding.

Further downstream in Romania, the rising Danube forced authorities to evacuate more than 6,700 people, mainly in the southern towns of Calarasi and Oltenita.

In neighboring Bulgaria, thousands of volunteers joined army troops to strengthen embankments along the surging Danube with sandbags, as the government came under political pressure for mishandling of the disaster.

The situation was expected to worsen across the Balkans within hours, with heavy rainfall forecast later Tuesday or Wednesday, adding to the melting snow which has contributed to the flooding.

The Tisza River rose to a record 9.8 metres in the Hungarian town of Szeged, and was moving south towards the already burning Danube, which flows on through Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria. AFP

Another baby for Brooke Shields

LOS ANGELES—ACTRESS Brooke Shields, who publicly battled Tom Cruise over post-partum depression, had a baby girl Tuesday, her publicist said, just as Cruise sent cereal to her daughter into the world.

BROOKE Shields and her husband Chris Henchy AFP

Shields, 40, gave birth to her second child with her husband Chris Henchy. 42. Pat Kingsley said AFP.

"Brooke Shields gave birth this morning in Los Angeles to baby Rowan Henchy, a healthy baby girl who weighed 3.18 kg and was 50.8 cm long," Kingsley said. "All are doing beautifully." Shields gave birth just as Cruise's fiancee Katie Holmes delivered a baby girl with almost identical dimensions just a few miles from Shields in Los Angeles.

The two-movie star last year engaged in an unusual public battle through the TV media over Shields's care of and depression to tackle a severe bout of post-natal depression following the 2005 birth of her daughter Rowan.

In an interview, 40-year-old Cruise, an active member of the Church of Scientology, criticized Shields's use of anti-depressant to get through her depression.

Bailey Beauty Shields first to fame as the child star of Louis Malle's 1978 drama "Pretty Baby", and followed that with the sexy 1980 hit "The Blue Lagoon." AFP

It's a girl for TomKat

LOS ANGELES—THE TOMKAT tots has arrived.

Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes, the public lovebirds dubbed TomKat by the media, had a baby girl Tuesday, said Cruise spokesperson Arnold Robinson.

The baby named Suri, weighed 3.4 kg and measured 50.8 cm long, he said.

"Both mother and daughter are doing well," Robinson said in a prepared statement.

The name Suri has its origins in Hebrew, meaning "princess," or in Persian, meaning "red rose," the statement said. The baby was born in Los Angeles but the exact location was not disclosed.

KATIE Holmes and Tom Cruise

It's the first child for Holmes, 27. Cruise, 43, has an adopted daughter and one from his marriage to Nicole Kidman.

Details surrounding the birth, which was planned under the tenets of the Church of Scientology as a silent procedure, weren't disclosed.

Absent a dozen reporters and photographers stood outside the Beverly Hills home where Cruise and Holmes live. Security officers inside the compound videotaped the journalists. AP

Michael Jackson's new album

LONDON—MICHAEL JACKSON, seeking to revive his singing career after his acquittal on sex abuse charges, has teamed up with a label in Britain to record a new album out by whose next year, the label said on Tuesday.

A statement issued on behalf of Two Sides Records said British music industry executive Guy Bennett had been named CEO of a newly formed joint venture between Jackson and Bahrain royal family member Abdulla Hamad Al Khalifa.

JACKSON

Haines, who now plans to divide his time between London and Bahrain, will oversee the making of Jackson's first studio album since "Invincible" in 2001, and also manage the star's business interests, the statement added.

"I am incredibly excited about my new venture, and I am enjoying being back in the studio making music," Jackson said in the statement.

The 47-year-old singer, one of the top-selling pop stars of all time, now lives in the Gulf state of Bahrain. Reuters

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The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Guzon

Bush won't rule out Iran nuke strike

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED STATES ON TUESday failed to secure international support for targeted sanctions against Iran and President George W. Bush refused to rule out nuclear strikes if diplomacy failed to curb the Islamic Republic's atomic ambitions.

Bush said he would discuss Iran's nuclear activities with Chinese President Hu Jintao, who has been cool toward sanctions, during his US visit this week.

Asked if his options included planning for a nuclear strike, Bush said: "All options are on the table. We want to solve this issue diplomatically and we're working hard to do so."

But a meeting of major powers in Moscow ended without consensus despite strong US pressure for international sanctions. Washington believes Iran is trying to build bombs but Tehran says it is only developing nuclear energy.

The meeting of deputy foreign ministers of the UN Security Council's permanent members—The United States, Britain, France, China and Russia—also Germany, was called after Tehran declared last week that it had enriched uranium and was aiming for industrial-scale production.

The No. 3 US State Department official, Nicholas Burns, argued that sanctions shouldn't be imposed on Iran, but Russia and China are resisting and the parties came to no agreement, said State Department spokesperson Tom Casey in Philippines.

"Russia raised the issue of some form of sanctions and there will need to be further discussions on this," he said after being briefed by US officials about the meeting.

The United States, which already enforces its own sweeping sanctions on Iran, wants the Security Council to be ready for strong diplomatic action, including sanctions such as a freeze on assets and visa curbs on Iranian officials.

Tehran had vowed to continue its pursuit of nuclear technology, whatever the meeting's outcome.

"Whatever the result of this meeting might be, Iran will not abandon its rights," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hamid Reza Asefi said before the meeting ended.

State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack stressed that the goal of the Moscow meeting was to make preparations for decisions to be taken in various capitals.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is due to report at the end of the month on whether Iran is complying with UN

demands that it halt uranium enrichment.

BUSH

Iran's defiance of world pressure to halt its program drove oil prices to a record high of $75.64 a barrel, raising fears of a cut in supplies from the world's fourth biggest crude exporter.

Speculation about a US attack has mounted since a report in New Yorker magazine said this month the Bush administration was considering the option of using tactical nuclear weapons to knock out Iran's underground nuclear sites.

China, which sent an envoy to Iran to try to defuse the standoff, repeated a call for a negotiated solution. "We hope all sides will maintain restraint and flexibility," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jin Gang said in Beijing.

Russia remained in opposition to punitive action. "We are convinced that neither the sanctions route nor the use of force route will lead to a solution of this problem," said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mikhail Kamynin, according to state Itar-Tass news agency report.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urged Iran to suspend its research and development efforts to enrich uranium in a telephone conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki on Monday, Interfax said.

US Sen. Joe Lieberman, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, told the Jerusalem Post that the United States probably could not destroy Iran's nuclear program but could attempt to set it back by strikes on plant sites.

"I think the only justifiable use of military power would be as attempt to slow the development of their nuclear program if we felt there was no other way to do it," he said.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, speaking at an annual military parade, said the army was ready to defend the nation. "It will cut off the hands of any aggressors and will make any aggressor regret it," he declared.

While refusing to drop its right to enrich uranium for peaceful use, Iran has offered to work with the IAEA.

The UN nuclear watchdog says it has been unable to verify that Iran's nuclear program is purely civilian but has found no hard proof of efforts to build atomic weapons.

Reuters

RECORD HIGH

Gold necklaces are displayed in a glass showcase at a jewelry shop in Singapore April 19. The price of gold reached its highest levels in more than 25 years.

AP

No one's indispensable but I won't quit—Rumsfeld

WASHINGTON—DEFENSE SECretary Donald Rumsfeld, boosted by another strong endorsement from President George W. Bush, said on Tuesday no one is indispensable but he is not considering quitting in the face of criticism from a handful of retired generals.

Rumsfeld, an architect of the 3-year-old Iraq war who has been a lightning rod for criticism, has faced an unusual spate of calls for his resignation from six retired generals. They accused him of disregarding military advice, ruling by intimidation and making strategic mistakes.

"The president knows, as I know, that there are no indispensable men," Rumsfeld said. "Universeds of the world are filled with 'indispensable' people." Critics have accused him of bullying senior officers and contemptuously rejecting their advice, such as deploying more troops in 2003 to occupy Iraq.

Asked whether he was arrogant and authoritarian as critics claim, Rumsfeld said in his typically blunt way, "You know me." He twice offered Bush his resignation in 2004 amid the Abu Ghraib prison scandal.

But Rumsfeld he said he would not consider resigning now to ease the burden on the president and Republicans during a congressional election year. "Mr. Bush knows that I serve at his pleasure and that's that."

Asked why he would offer to resign after Abu Ghraib but not now, Rumsfeld replied, "Oh, just call it idiosyncratic."

As a Bush Cabinet centerpiece, Bush lauded Rumsfeld as he did in a news conference last Friday.

"Don Rumsfeld is doing a fine job," Bush said. "He's not only transforming the military he's fighting a war on terror—he's helping us fight a war on terror. I have strong confidence in Don Rumsfeld."

"I hear the noise. And I read the front page. And I know the speculation. But I'm the decider. And I decide what is best. And what's best is for Don Rumsfeld to remain as the secretary of defense," Bush said.

Rumsfeld doubted there was broad Pentagon support for military cuts over his leadership. Speaking at Rumsfeld's side, Marine Corps Gen. Peter Pace, Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, said he was on such discussions.

Reuters

RUMSFELD

Chernobyl death toll could be higher, says Greenpeace

LONDON—ENVIRONMENTAL group Greenpeace said on Tuesday the eventual death toll from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster could be far higher than official estimates, with up to 93,000 cancer deaths attributable to the accident.

Based on research by the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the report said that of the 2.3 billion people globally affected by the Chernobyl fallout, 270,000 would develop cancer as a result, of which 93,000 would prove fatal.

The Chernobyl Forum, a group of eight UN agencies and governments of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, has estimated an eventual death toll of only a few thousand as a result of the April 26, 1986 explosion at the power plant in the Ukrainian town of Chernobyl. The blast sent a plume of radioactive dust across northern and western Europe and as far as the eastern United States.

Greenpeace anti-nuclear campaigner Jean Blaise accused the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN nuclear watchdog, of "whitewashing the impacts of the worst nuclear accident in the nuclear history."

In Vienna, an IAEA official rejected the accusation, saying it was responsible to the Senate only for an environmental impact study while the casualty figures were drawn up by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Gregory Hartl, a spokesperson for Geneva-based WHO, said it stood by its figures. He said the predicted eventual number of extra deaths in the hardest hit areas of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia was estimated to be 4,000.

Another 5,000 deaths were predicted among those who had been living in less-contaminated zones of the three countries at the time of the disaster, he added.

Hartl also noted that WHO had not done a European-wide study and said Greenpeace's figures appeared to assume too.

The Greenpeace report said that a further 200,000 people in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus could have died as a result of medical sanctions—such as antibacterials, diseases—attributable to the disaster but that there was no accepted methodology to calculate deaths from such diseases.

Reuters

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SPORTS
Editor Teddyve S. Philandro

GAB meeting fetes Pacman

BEGINNING WORLD BOXING COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL super featherweight champion Manny Pacquiao will be feted Friday night at the Grand Ballroom of the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila during the gala night and awarding ceremonies of the ongoing first GAB Philippine Boxing Convention, to be held from such non-hotels.

President Manuel Jarosay will bestow the national award to Pacquiao and other former world boxing champions as guest and speaker of the special affair.

The event is under the supervision of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and spearheaded by Games and Amusement Board chair Eric V. Buhain.

"This is history in the making for our pro sporting industry in the country, much more in pro boxing," GAB said, adding that the event is being held for the first time since the establishment of the GAB as an agency tasked to regulate and supervise the conduct of all professional sports in the country.

"The launching of the Presidential priority program is aimed at creating sound policies and mechanisms for the conservation and promotion of Filipino fighters and future generations of aspiring pro boxers," Buhain noted.

A special boxing event will also take place at the Tejeli Gymnasium in Malolos (where dubbed as the "Republic of the Bay" with Pilot super bantamweight champion Jun Bulawan clashing with Kinkaroch Kaiwhdang of Thailand in the main). Marc Anthony Reyes

DAUNTY Siaqui of San Miguel Beer over brothers Yancy and Ronald De Ocampo. DIR.INCIR.

Streaking Beermen clobber Express

By June Navarro

SAN MIGUEL BEER KEPT THE LONGEST streak of the season alive by walloping ALASKA, 117-100, last night in the Gran Matador-PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

Danny Seigle was unstoppable from all angles while Jimmy Bolderson and Dorian Peña toyed with the Express frontline so the Beermen's second-to-third straight win.

"We really haven't thought about it," said San Miguel Beer coach Jong Uichico after the Beermen got back in the Express, who fumed their set in the wild card phase of the Fiesta Cup last conference.

The early owner was only checked San Miguel's bid to defend its title but also ended the Beermen's streak of 24 conferences since 1996 where they always advanced past the preliminary round.

"I didn't put that on a motivational tool. They (players) took it upon themselves," said Uichico.

Seigle typified the Beermen's fire by scoring nine of his game-high 26 points in a third-quarter tsunami that opened an 83-74 spread for the SMB watering the final period.

Bolderson also had nine of his 23 while Peña contributed a couple of three-point plays in that span to finish with 22 points and 12 rebounds.

Brandon Hunter's 19 points and five assists while Brandon Cobbey posted his first double figure in a two Alaska uniform by shelling in 24 points, 12 of them in the last quarter.

"I had the feel of getting more after we took a three-day break," said Uichico. "I guess they proved me wrong today."

The Beermen controlled their strongholds of the last after picking up six, 8 in 10 outings while sending the Express to a third straight defeat, their seventh overall in the entire number of games.

The powers actually managed the downfall of the Express although they hammered the Beermen off the boards, 58-41. The Express outmatched 29 rebounds compared with San Miguel's 15.

Wynne Arboleda led four other Express in double figures with 23 points on top of 12 rebounds, seven assists and two steals.

Rafael Reliford contributed 17 points, Marvin Cabatuan and Randolf De Ocampo had 15 each while Ronald Tubid rounded in 12 points.

The scores:

San Miguel Beer 117: —Seigle 26, Bolderson 23, Peña 22, Hontiveros 18, Cabagnot 14, Ronald 8, Ildefonso 2, Lopez 2, Abdenasir, Enriquez 0.

Alaska 100: —Arboleda 23, Hunter 19, Cabatuan 15, De Ocampo 15, Tubid 12, De Ocampo 10, Reliford 10, Dela Cruz 3, Velasco 2, Dela Cruz 0, Bernardo 0, Pulido 0.

Quarters: 27-29, 55-45, 85-74, 117-100.

3 RP shuttlers nip Vietnamese foes

THREE PHILIPPINE SHUTTLERS pulled off a notable big win at the start of the Pelita Vietnam Sandiko badminton championships Tuesday night at the Main Dinh Phong Competition Hall in Ho Chi Minh City.

Jerwin "Boy" Arcelle, the Filipino No. 4, downed local Int Hoan Gia Hoa, 21-17, 21-19, while Mark Magsulat and Wilson Pan scored three set victories over their respective Vietnamese opponents.

Magsulat knocked out Nguyen Van Ban, 15-21, 21-16, 21-16, while Pan turned back Nguyen Duc Ngoc Trung, 9-21, 21-9, 21-15, to advance in the tournament.

But 14-year old JP Bolaod succumbed to Vietnam's Nguyen Thanh Long, 21-12, 21-8, and RP No. 3 Jaime Arcelle dropped a gallant round against Malaysian Kenan Kam Cheong, Tan Malaysian seen, 20-22, 5-21, 23-19. Marc Anthony Reyes

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Abdon, Tabuena ahead in Junior World qualifier

TABUENA

JOB BY JOSE "JOJO" ABDON PINGO on eagle-spiked A-under-par 68 to stake a four-stroke lead over Ji Chao A after the third round yesterday of the Callaway Junior World qualifying tournament at the Sunnong Jungdell Tour at the Shenzhen Hills course in Tuen Mun, Guilin.

Abdon highlighted his round with an eagle 3 on his 5-foot putt on the 9-under-par 135 to lead Ji, who was with three birdies against two bogeys in his second round with a 72 (aggregate 139).

Abdon, who was tied for 11th after a 71 on eagle-spiked A-under-par 68 to stake a four-stroke lead over Ji Chao A after the third round yesterday of the Callaway Junior World qualifying tournament at the Sunnong Jungdell Tour at the Shenzhen Hills course in Tuen Mun, Guilin.

Abdon highlighted his round with an eagle 3 on his 5-foot putt on the 9-under-par 135 to lead Ji, who was with three birdies against two bogeys in his second round with a 72 (aggregate 139).

Abdon, who was tied for 11th after a 71 on the first day, and Tabuena, who was tied for 15th after a 73, were with three birdies against two bogeys in their second round with a 72 (aggregate 141).

Tabuena, who was tied for 15th after a 73, and Abdon, who was tied for 11th after a 71, were with three birdies against two bogeys in their second round with a 72 (aggregate 141).

Other Philippine qualifiers were Tiburcio, Wilmore, Le Jolla, Xavier Wade, Wilson, Ping Aaron Magdo, Gerlomo, MMCU de Leyzel, Jeremiah Gruell and Richard Cruz.

The third round results:

[illegible]

Agojo cops WCC crown, player of year honors

JAYVEE Agojo makes her presence felt in the LIG.

FILIPINO PROGRAMS JAYVEE AGOJO (LAMBDA) GOV PROMISEUL honors while helping eighth-seeded Pepperdine University capture its fifth straight West Coast Conference (WCC) women's golf championship Tuesday at the Saddle Creek Golf Course in Coppertopolis, California.

The 20-year-old Agojo rounded in a 1-over-par 221 for 54 holes to top nominees and three-time WCC champion Carolina Lopez-Jaynes and become the fifth straight Pepperdine player to bag the title and the second for the Waves and Freshmen of the Year by the WCC.

All five Pepperdine players earned honors in the top 10 to help the Waves to an 899 tally and a 20-shot victory over San Francisco.

Senior Chris Ohlen was third, followed by Gonzaga (915) and Portland (944).

"I am pleased with the result and happy for Jayvee," head coach Laurie Gibbs said. "We played well throughout the tournament and we are looking forward to carrying that momentum into the NCAA Regionals scheduled May 11.

"It is an impressive accomplishment for a freshman to capture individual medalist honors," added Gibbs. "It should provide her with a lot of confidence as she heads into her first NCAA Regionals."

Sophomores Jeanine Bendich and Marina Chu tied for fifth place with 226, while junior Eileen Vergara tallied 234. All the Waves were named all-WCC.

Gibbs was named the conference's Coach of the Year for the second year in a row and seventh time in her last nine years.

The Waves will be making their ninth straight regional championship appearance and Gibbs earned

Valley's Tuason Centennial Cup blasts off today

THE FIRST BATCH OF PLAYERS from among the record 840 participants in the seventh Valley Golf and Country Club annual member-guest tournament are all ready at the championship tees and outrunner company is in tow.

Dubbed as the Don Cedar Tuason Centennial Cup, this year's tournament commemorates the 100th birthday celebration of Valley's pioneer owner and one of its founders.

Her forebearer Mike Arroyo, a regular of the tournament however will lead the blitzing of the contender Dalla at 6:40, Arroyo is teaming up with Manolo Tuason for the 36-hole competition spread out in four days. Also expected to be the first tee are cousins Sole, Emilio, Rodney, and Ralph Tuason as well as Valley president Louie Reyes and organizing committee head Jose Salvador.

The Tuason Centennial Cup, presented by Smart Communications for the second straight year, makes prizes worth over 1.5 million with a hole-in-one package that includes a Mitsubishi Lancer, Suzuki APV and Samsung plasma.

Raffle prizes totaling P2.5 million topped by a Honda golf cart, a Rolex watch, a Mizuno golf set and lateral disks, and household appliances will be given away.

The tournament is backed by Interaxa, Cobra Pilsbo, Consumer Japan and Solaire, PCSO and Makati Skyline as major sponsors. Premium sponsors are Brand Myers Sports, Orchid Machinery, Unibank PLA, Dendel B, GMA, WPAGE Express, Inc., Super Security, Gilda T. Fast Food Services, Oriental Assistance, PBCC, Bitmax, Anabeth, Unilever, Unilab, Health Nutritionals.

SPORTSWATCH

Makati Desmarinas Rotary golf

THE MAKATI Desmarinas Rotary golf tournament on the Saturday, April 29, 2006 will hold its Twenty-Four Golf Holes and Hole-in-One golf tournament tomorrow at the Sherwood Hills Golf and Country Club in San Mateo, Rizal. Tournament chair and immediate past president Dr. Alfi Sao expects more than 100 players to participate. PCSO president Sixto Brillantes and Sao are the tournament's honorary chairmen. Proceeds will go to community service and at the same time raise money for the next Rotary year. Tournament tees are priced at P2,000 each, including the players' green fees, lunch, gifts and giveaways. Major sponsors are Sao Miguel Corp., Oishi-Ace Pilsbo, Nestlé Waters, Jollibee, Sherwood Golf and Country Club. Hole-in-one prize is a Nissan Sentra. 1.8. For details, contact Dr. Sao at 8900-3879.

Gov. Reyes Chess Cup May 5-8

THE [illegible] Chess Cup, dedicated to the outstanding mother, Ana Reyes Chess Cup, Chess championship dedicated to the outstanding mother, Ana Reyes, Philippine City Treasurer. Organized by provincial administration and National Chess Federation of the Philippines, vice president Isagani Nelson Santiago and sponsored by the provincial government of Palawan, the event offers P120,000 in prizes. The champion gets P60,000, the runner-up P30,000, the third place P15,000, the fourth place P10,000 and the fifth place P5,000. The 88 to 100 players will receive P1,000 each. NCFP president Rep. Prospero "Bobbi" Pichay Jr. and secretary-general Atty. Jaqueline Ong Reyes Gonzalez "Bambai" Tolentino have been invited to grace the opening rites on May 5. For details, contact Lani Abugado at (02) 527-5011 and Roger Tanseco at (0917) 5-[illegible]. [illegible]

Arbiters, trainers, coaches seminar

THE CHESSMASTER Arbiters, trainers and coaches seminar will be held on May 6 to 7, 2006 at the Amphitheater of the Philippine Nationalist University, Mabini Avenue, Malolos City. To open the opening ceremony are National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Rep. Prospero "Bobbi" Pichay, Malolos City Mayor Reynaldo Gonzalez Jr. and NCF President Dr. Jose C. Meneses. Registration fees is P2,000, inclusive of food, participant's bag, t-shirt and other paraphernalia. Facilitators are Dr. Jesus Meneses, Fabian Gonzalez, Ronald Santiago, Alexandrian Mabini, Gene Pelaez, Hernandiano Mabini, Rodolfo San Cristobal, Eusebio Bolico Jr. and National Arbiter Jose Bernardo Cardenas Jr. Mayor at (044) 9115-[illegible]/[illegible]; engineer Nestor Bernardo Pichay at (0917) [illegible]; Francis Cardenas at (0917) [illegible]; Royal Tumbaga at (0917) [illegible]; Atty. Ruben Magbanua at (0917) [illegible] and Lolita Ong at (0917) [illegible]. [illegible]

Texas Hold-Em Poker tilt April 22

GRABE Kitchen Angeles prepares to host the first Texas Hold-Em Poker Tournament on April 22 at the Clarkson Boulevard, Angeles. Registration starts at 10 a.m. The event is expected to give Hold-Em enthusiasts a chance to participate in thousands of prizes in cash and other merchandise points worth 30 centavos. In addition, Hold-Em will give a chance to compete for the championship trophy, cash and other prizes worth P10,000 for the champion, P5,000 for the runner-up, P2,500 for the third place. For inquiries, call the Grabe's spokesman at (045) 625-[illegible] or marketing section at (045) 625-[illegible] or visit [illegible].

LPC cockfest states 32 fights

GRATE and Metro Manila cockers dash for Lion Pride Cockers's annual 3-cock derby featuring 32 fights today. A cash prize of P500,000 is at stake in the event which will be hosted by Angel Sangalang. Entries must be submitted until 12 p.m. the other 3-cock derby kicks off at 1:30 p.m. April 30 with Henry Kindymantle of Lucban, Aurora, Quezon, Bicol, Cebu, Davao and Mindanao cockers flying in from Monday to Friday, where a bonus of P100,000 awaits the final 20 winners. For details, call 833-10[illegible] and 831-[illegible].

Camarines Sur hosts 6-cocker

THE Mandaragat Promotions 6-Cock Texas Derby will be held at the Pinahanacan Coliseum in Bgy. San Vicente, Milaor, Camarines Sur tomorrow with Promoter Mario Lopez's conditioner as main backer. The event offers a P100,000 guaranteed cash prize. Derby promoters ready reservations (Mandaragat). Contact Mr. [illegible] 0917-[illegible] and Danny [illegible].

Olympiad-bound So joining Dubai tilt

SO

UNAFRAID CITY—THE FILIPINO GRANDMASTER is set to be the Dubai.

Fide Master Wesley So tabbed the final playoffs of the National Chess Championship Tuesday, becoming the youngest ever member of the Philippine team to the Chess Olympiad in Turin (Italy).

So beat National Master John Bert Gunnar in the fourth round and then drew with NM Rodrick Sabio in the fifth and concluding round to top the six-man playoffs with 3.5 points and earn the last slot for the 10th men's team to the Olympiad event set for Turin, Italy from May 19 to June 5.

The fourth and final round is tomorrow and been entrenched overnight quals from NM Dennis Lapis and NM Oliver Dimaliwat in the tournament.

Showing the form that made him joint first placer (with 12.5 points) of the 2005 World Youth Championships in Belfort, France, he also drew with International Master Herman Suan, but NM Mitchness Magat and drew with NM Roderick Sabio, respectively.

So, accompanied by his father William, will leave for Dubai tomorrow to compete in the Dubai Open. Their trip is being supported by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office through director Strike Revilla and Pilipino Marketing CEO/president Alex Marcos "Chito" Tagaytay.

Meet and Wesley left-hand of catching up by with 3.5 points each.

Unfortunate Cebu Mandaue will join NM Dionner Jay Lomibao, NWM Catherine Ongcoy and NWM Shirelly Cuan in the women's team to the Olympiad where she'll be making her fifth straight appearance.

Both Mandaue and Manila Cup finished the playoffs, hosted by Iligan City Mayor and National Chess Federation of the Philippines secretary general Abraham "Bam Bol" Tolentino under the helm of NCFP president Rep. Prospero "Bobbi" Pichay with 3.0 points. NM Harlem Bernardino

3 V-League teams make debut today

THE THREE NEW TEAMS IN THE SHAKEY'S V-League dive begins of the early where they all open action at the opening of the Beijing volley. Shakey's second conference Saturday at the Blue Eagle gym.

Philippine Christian University and Adamson might under Tipos, course before thirteen teams the University of the Earth's Early Warriors in the second game at 4:30.

"We're happy to be here in the V-League but we're not just here to play but also to win," said PCU coach Basilio Gonzalez, who steered the Dolphins to the 2005-2006 NCAA title.

Included in the PCU lineup are guard Jhayr Cajangan and Lani Cornejo, Cesar Magdeg, Romulo Mamaran, Arlene Bacasmas and Eliseo Antonio Barrios.

Adamson, on the other hand, will lean on the seasoned team manager Cherry Rose Mamaranga and Nelito de Leon, who will be the point playmaker for the team that also placed second in the Lionel Ho University Games and the Bamboo Cup last year.

Mamaranga, an Adamson alumna, is one of the country's top spikers, while de Leon, who played college ball for perennial UAAP champion Ateneo Varsity, is a seasoned setter.

"What I have here is a solid team that can challenge any team for the crown," said Adamson coach Dolce Pinto.

Providing support for Mamaranga and De Leon are Christine Andoar, Rona Lagunilla, Jackie Ilo, Stefanie Mendoza, Jeanneth Santos and Marie Jessa Alabastro.

The event is being presented by Shakey's and backed by ABC-5, Milano and Asia. The V-League second conference will be played Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. ABC-5 will air the games every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Marc Anthony Reyes

UAAP to resume La Salle probe

THE UAAP BOARD WILL START ITS DELIBERATIONS on the La Salle eligibility case after the league's fact-finding committee presents its final report and recommendations to school representatives in a board meeting tomorrow.

Sources told league officials have reserved Saturday dates next week in the event that no final decision will be made on the die-hard collegiate scandal involving Archers Mark Jeremy and Tim Dela Rosa.

The five-man investigating panel said last March that it only needs "a maximum and one plus" the report based on interviews from the parties involved in the controversy.

Suspensions from the league is among the possible punishment La Salle could face for seemingly holding thrice the Dwight Santos' 40 Boys

Santillan stakes OPBF title

BEGINNING ORIENTAL AND PACIFIC BOXING Federation welterweight champ and WBC No. 11 Ben Santillan of the Philippines will defend his title on today against Japan's Masaaki Yamaguchi at 11 rounds in the Bunkamura Hall in Tokyo, Japan.

The southpaw Santillan (20-0-1, 14 KO) will take the belt he regained from Kazuhiko Hidaka last December. Yamaguchi (14-0-1, 9 KO) is best prey to drop a boxer since his debut in 2005. Trainer Boy Pinto will will translate. Sabine Lagandang

Jota shatters drag race mark four times

DAVIE Jota (right) trails at the grandstands after he romped to a new record time of 11.382 seconds in his wins over Miss Wendes.

BAMBANG, BATANGAS.—Danielle Dueñas Davie Jota has shattered her own record four times before bagging the Quick Crown recently in the finals of the 2006 Red Horse PCSO National Drag Racing Championship presented by the Drag Bike of the Bamboo Racing Circuit.

The 29-year old Jota broke her own records twice of 11.850 seconds right on her first qualifying run with 11.711 seconds and improved it to 11.666 seconds and bin-crowned Ely.

Just when everybody thought it would be the last for sure she, Jota clocked a new record of 11.650 in her first Quick 8 Sweep against Gerlie Ramos of Team Bamboo. Also Bicol, he capped the run with a 11.586 seconds over Mark Lim of 11.5866 seconds on the finals against Miss Vitaulio.

Jota, however, wasn't as lucky in the Pro Class where her mate Jonathan and Jay Gonzaga Garcia of M. Antonio were in the quarter final round.

Winning the other classes were Edel Cruzan of Group 8, Ian Bendeller of Good Guys Group 9 Bang of Ka Ezra Gill BPC Operations Manager Ramdin Rivera or Nelson Fajardo in (0912) 877-1041, 729-5365 or 501-8151-1241 for details.

Tortillos face Sparks; TeleTech meets Hapee

DANIEL TIGAY (Manor College Sports Center)
2 p.m. —TeleTech vs Hapee PTO
4 p.m. —Sparks vs Tagaytay Tiles

IF COACH CHUCK ALAVA HAD HIS WAY, there, should he so meet and game rollers for the Tortillos Chito Sparks.

Then, the Sparks will try to get off fast and finish strong when they tackle Tagaytay Game Tortillos in the PBL Unity Cup at 4 p.m. today at the Chinese Cultural Sports Center in Parañaque.

"We have to play smart basketball from start to finish. We have to start well and not just play catch up," said Alava, noting that the Sparks have been relying on comeback efforts to clinch last three games.

A key acquisition, though, has buoyed the hopes of the cellar-dwelling TeleTech Titans going into their 2 p.m. duel against the Hapee-DCS Toothpastemen.

TY Tang, the 5-foot-6 starting point guard of the La Salle Archers, will be suiting up for the Titans starting today.

"We're a close player, he will be an asset to the team," said coach Jerry Codiñera. "We hope to stop our losing streak with him."

Toyota Otis displayed resiliency after pulling off come-from-behind victories against TeleTech and the league-leading Shoemaxx Jewels.

But tail-end-set on the Sparks when their rally fell short versus the Magnolia Spinners, 81-77, last Tuesday.

Despite the explosive performances of 38-pts Joe Devanne, the Sparks saw their three-game winning streak end as they fell into a tie with Rain or Shine for second place at 4-2.

The Aztecs 7 Devanne delivered 38 points, nine rebounds and three blocks.

Kelvin dela Peña chose to Tommy Gomez's 62-61 triumph over defending champion Rain or Shine, scoring seven of his 15 points in the fourth quarter, including the game winner.

The Tortillos took their fourth win with Brix Pesa manning up with big men Al Quinahan and Al-De Ejercito.

Associate W. Pagra

The saga that is Graham Lim

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

MANY ARE THE OFFICE OF GRAHAM LIM, the unlimited secretary general of the unrefined from the Olympic movement Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP).

The critics accuse Graham Lim of transcending the downfall of Philippine basketball on the world stage. And that was because he kept on sending abroad teams that were not worthy of international play.

Well, contrary to popular phrase the essence of Graham Lim's operations.

You are the no-gets and like most surprise, you have almost complete control of everything.

Graham Lim had the BAP almost by the nuts because the then BAP president had power, if not time (upon investment), power to ride his reel. By choice, I believe. Why, because Tiny Literal had been too ill to perform his duties well as BAP president. Left with no choice, Tiny had to retired, wholly, the leadership reins to Graham Lim.

The result was a retired one-man rule by Graham Lim.

He formed squads that were almost worthy only of joining mere barangay tournaments. In fact, only when Graham Lim's team was teeled up by the 21 players that due team became truly birth-ready. One such team, with John Trevino as its mentoring, was a tournament in Shanghai (China) a while back.

With almost unlimited powers, Graham Lim ran the BAP like his own parlor, dispatching players for overseas battles picked from areas not known to breed basketball greats.

Mainly there was PCCL, known admittedly as producer of the finest performers in the country's foot and basketball labors. It let the PBA, if not two national play.

Nobody would have minded, except that such teams would finish last most of the time, or near the cellar.

The height of idiocy happened when a mediocre-skilled squad from Pampanga defeated a Philippine team that was supposedly deep into training for a mission overseas. That done fala team the round-cage fans of this nation whom well loved religion notice Catholicism was basketball. In shame, the team was disbanded. Before we knew it, in touch, Bayan Taxan had frame an instrumentalist for a coaching job. Not long after, the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) passed assuredly expelled the BAP from the POC.

Even before all this had happened, Graham Lim was hatching another war more pounding than ever (upline) involving Filipino swimmings panel the disbarred scheme of two of his former BAP associates to have him deported for being an alien.

Recently, he was arrested and ordered deported—by whom, this country of and. Not imperfections seem to know. What, Raul Gonzalez did it?

But even before we could decipher who or dared his arrest, who ordered his deportation, the Court of Appeals came to Graham Lim's rescue by ordering his release from the custody of the Bureau of Immigration. His deportation to Taiwan had also been declared.

Her 19 days, Graham Lim suffered the ignominy of being detained and the willing pains of getting hospitalized due to hypertension brought on by tension and anxiety.

Struggling hard to hoist sweet home, Graham Lim may have lost several associates but remains unbroken in spirit—unshaken, steadfast in his fight to save Filipino citizenship.

Where will they deport the man who was born and raised in the Philippines, nobody knows.

China will not accept him because he is not a Chinese citizen.

Taiwan will not accept him either even if he allegedly travels using a Taiwan document.

Where will they make him Filipino, nobody knows.

Why they continue to deny his application for Filipino citizenship on a more technicality define logic. If he were canonized Tito instead of Lim, would it have mattered?

Today, Malacañang has denied his appeal not to be deported. He, he remains undeported.

What mystery surrounds this man, what cloak protects him from banishment?

Definitely Graham Lim is more than just a basketball master.

Who is this man, and even Co Teng Bah, Graham Lim's long time benefactor, knows the answer any longer.

When will his saga end, I do not have the slightest hint.

* * *

NATIONAL: It's all systems go for the 3rd Boy Bonoyo Cup, the nation's most prestigious invitational shooting event, on April 21-23 at the Quezon City Police firing range, Camp Aguinaldo, QC. The PPSA-sanctioned Level 1 match features 5 action-packed pistol and 3 shotgun stages. Proceeds of the shoot will go to the beneficiary and crippled children under the care of Mabuhay Home Ones and The Green Initiatives Inc.

* * *

Comments to mendoza@phildat.net

Tagaytay five wins

Scores: Tortos 67, F. Hapee Dental
6 p.m. —Bacolod Harbour vs Laguna
7 p.m. —Pampanga vs Sagay Pampelmoes
8 p.m. —Hapee vs Pagadian

TAGUIG CITY—RAZMAN TAGAYTAY rode on the steady performance of big guns Rudel Mallari and Aaron Galyah to squash Laguna Gin, Sons, 82-66, Tuesday night and grab a share of the northern division lead with idle Spring Cooking Oil-Pinar Inspo to the 2006 Governor Brondy MIC national basketball championship at the CJC Bugo gym here.

With guards Tito Sison struggling throughout, Mallari and Galyah combined for 28 points to power Nik Caramoder star president and Hapee Dental Education's Tagaytay boys to their second win in three games.

The Pinoys of Gov. Romulo "Dingoding" Lanero and Sta. Rosa Mayor Jun Kaindig enthroned their Nuarch straight win in the tourney sponsored by Dimensonic, Sulpicio Lines, Sunjam's Spring Mineral Water, Spring Cooking Oil, Magnol Stock, Firefly Lighting, Molten and Prime Channel.

The game was close in the first half, which saw Tagaytay lead by only two.

Tag scores

TAGAYTAY 82—Mallari 16, Galyah 12, Bienvenu 11, Sandoval, De Guia 8, Bulalacao 6, Mendoza 4, Ong 4, Tenkar 3, Abrado 2, Bondoc 2, Dupia 2, Jungco 2

LAGUNA 66—Bugay 14, Arcayna 14, Santiago 12, Amarante 7, Balmaceda 6, Bagunas 5, Ty 3, Dela 1, Cardino 1, Espinol, Aquino 0

Quarters: 15-12, 34-32, 48-44, 82-66

Lasuc bets lead Pasuc

HEADLESS SWIMMER: An unidentified bet dives in the pools in the Pasuc Olympics.

LUZON ASSOCIATION OF STATE AND Universities and Colleges (Lasuc) surged ahead in the first day of the inaugural Philippine Association of State Colleges and Universities (Pasuc) National Olympics at the Marikina Sports Complex Tuesday.

Lasuc dominated the first day of swimming and aquatics, grabbing a total of 30 gold 10 silver and 2 bronze medals. Mindanao Association of State Colleges and University Foundation (Macsuf) was second 8 gold 10 silver and 11 bronze medals, followed behind by Visayas Association of State universities and Colleges (Vasuc) with 8 gold 5 silver and 8 bronze medals.

In athletics, Marcelo Dorcelles Molitas topped two golds. Molitas ruled the women's shot put with a lasuc of 9.99m and then the javelin throw with a lasuc of 26.48m.

Lasuc found its cheer of gold in RTU-hosted swimmers Rowenna Velayo who topped three golds.

The inaugural Pasuc Olympics features basketball, volleyball, athletics, swimming, chess, football, baseball, softball, badminton, aquatic events, taekwondo, tennis, table tennis and boxing.

Spring Oil rips Pearl Hotel-EAC for victory No. 4

DEFENDING CHAMPION SPRING Cooking Oil made it four in a row. Steering Jerrel Cardinalis Agustin Cadiz, 79-68, Tuesday in the 2006 Dixie Open basketball tournament at the EAC gym in Manila.

The Cooking Oil Masters of national shooter Nathaniel "Tim" Padilla drove balanced scoring from Mikko Moreno, Danny Capulong, Mac Reyes and Rudel Manuel to frustrate the Hotelliers and move within a win of completing a first round sweep of the tourney sponsored by Chico Lightings and Stanich Cafe.

Moreno scattered 12 points and orchestrated the plays for Spring which led from start to finish.

Capulong and Reyes added 10 points apiece while Manuel contributed 9.

Mac Reyes carried the Tight for Pearl with 14 markers.

Overshadowed by Spring's strength was Wesley's 83-74 win over UP-Diliman Fillos Kings in the other game.

The scores

SPRING 79—Moreno 12, Capulong 10, Reyes 10, Manuel 9, Sian 7, Tengco 7, Dela Cruz 5, Sandoval 4, Dalusong 2, Yap 2, Cardinalis 2, Cadiz 1

PEARL EAC 68—Bergas 14, Chua 12, Mamaysin 9, Espina 8, Santos 5, Bulaklak 5, Cardona 4, Ty 4, Valderama 2, Lagutin 1, Tagaloc 1, Arcanta 0, J. Cardillo 0, Del Carmen 0, Manio 0

Quarters: 19-14, 37-30, 61-43, 79-68

SPORTS

ANTONIO Daniels of the Washington Wizards hangs in the air after dunking the ball in front of Bobby Simmons of the Milwaukee Bucks.

Sixers fine C-Webb, AI

PHILADELPHIA—ALLEN IVERSON and Chris Webber did not play because of injuries, did not show up in the locker room until tipoff and missed the Philadelphia 76ers' 91-88 win over the New Jersey Nets on Tuesday night.

The 76ers will first harrass and Webber for not being at the game 90 minutes before the game against the Nets, and the duo might not make the trip to Detroit for the game in Charlotte on Wednesday.

Iverson said he knew at Tuesday morning's shootaround that Iverson and Webber would be given the house regular season finale off because of injuries, but Kings Delaughter the Sixers leading scorer in the game.

Andre Iguodala had 17 points for the Sixers, Willie Green had 14 and Steven Hunter 10.

Lamond Murray scored 19 points for New Jersey, Vince Carter had 26 and Jason Kapono added 13 points.

In other games, it was Atlanta 105, Miami 100; Washington 116, Milwaukee 102; Memphis 103, LA Clippers 95; Sacramento 111, Seattle 105.

In Washington, Gilbert Arenas scored 32, while 42 points in the second half, and Washington overcame a career-high 45 points from Michael Redd.

Redd and Arenas combined for 42 points in the second half as the two analysts dueled with playoff intensity for the chance to avoid Detroit, Miami or New Jersey in the first round. Redd has quite a hot hand, made over 600 plus, but so one which is for one of the top three seeds where Cleveland, returning to the playoffs after a long absence, is not available opponent at No. 4.

The victory gave the Wizards a one game lead over Chicago and Indiana and a 1½-game lead over Milwaukee. AP

◆NBA in SPORTS—Results: Milwaukee 24 ...

Knicks legend picks Spurs, Pistons

NEW YORK—WALT "CLYDE" FRAZIER, the Hall of Fame point guard who led the New York Knicks to NBA titles in 1970 and 1973, expects this year's playoffs to be a close contest between San Antonio and Detroit in the Finals.

"Look for a little deja vu," Frazier said, predicting another showdown between the Spurs and Pistons.

"But look for a little twist this year because the Pistons have home court advantage and that might be enough to catapult them to the championship."

The Pistons, champions in 1989, lost in seven games to the Spurs in the 2005 finals, dropping the finals to San Antonio.

Frazier, a TV commentator on Rainbow broadcasts, cited some potential surprises.

"In the Eastern Conference, the Nets could be a surprise team in the Carolina. Otherwise the Pistons are a close one to make," added Frazier, who said Miami was little more than a two-man team featuring Dwyane Wade and Shaquille O'Neal.

"But Nets, I think Detroit could be a darkhorse, the Suns, the Spurs, Dallas...it's going to be very difficult. I'm going with the Spurs, on the line all around were with the best all-around player in Tim Duncan."

Frazier announced a tour of former NBA stars bringing the league's championship trophy to US military bases. Reuters

UST cager dies trying to save two children

By Jasmine W. Paye

A YOUNG CAGER FROM THE 100 society of the Tamo died of carbon monoxide after saving two children in a swimming pool accident in Taguaytay last Saturday night.

John Lee Apil, a sophomore of Ramsgate Studies the Bonnel Ad-Board, will be laid to rest on April 25 in his hometown in Indana, Taguaytay. He was the only child of Charles Apil and Ann Amy.

The 23-year-old Apil, a first year commerce student in the physical education and athletic department, debuted with the Tigers in the last Final season.

Details of the accident were sketchy.

"He was a promising player," said former UST coach Nel Beatrio, who recruited Apil from St. Paul University in Taguaytay. "When he played, he contributed to of (former UST star) Dale Singson."

Apil, a future guard, suited up for six games last season. Although he played only limited minutes on the first year, Pacado credited Apil for his hard work.

"It was his birthday (Sept. 1) when he played his first game for UST," recalled Pacado. "He didn't score much but he contributed in assists and we defeated Ateneo in the second round."

The UST community has been offering masses and tributes for Apil.

NBA great returns with optimism

NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION LEGEND Calvin Murphy believes he will like what he sees—and people will like what he sees—when he plays games in the Philippines to perfect with other former NBA greats in The Real Big Time.

"I expect to see a higher quality of play, though I was quite pleased with the talent I saw in the 1970s," Murphy said, just a few days before arriving to play alongside Willie Hall of Power Alex English and Tom Boswell against local Filipino talent.

"They will see the same skills (from me) and a great entertainer," Murphy added.

Two games are set, the first at the Mandaue City in Cebu against the Sarsi Kapal all-stars on April 27 and the second at the Araneta Coliseum on May 1 against Filipino Basketball made up of the finest standouts in the Philippine Basketball Association to be coached by Chot Reyes.

Marsh's team will not be short handed, with Mexico Honorist, Daryll Quarles, Otis Birdsong English and Wolfman also playing. The American will be backstopped by high-flying standouts from the NBA Developmental League.

"Fans will see American basketball played to its finest in almost the size bowls," said Mario Valbuena, president of Mind Kind Sports which is bringing the team all-star NBA all-star over.

Valbuena got excited after getting the confirmation on the participation of Murphy, one of the short, at once to over jobs in the NBA but whose world career gave him a Hall of Fame ticket.

Last 5-foot-9, Murphy, who was dubbed in the second round by the San Diego Rockets in 1970, finished with career numbers of 17.9 points, 1.195 steals and 4,482 levels in 7,102 games.

Murphy also said that the Philippines would not be represented in the NBA.

"Coaches in the NBA today don't look at size," said Murphy, who owns the NBA record for consecutive free throws made at 78, which he set in the 1980-81 season. "They look at talent."

NUMBER 1? Calvin Murphy

ENTERTAINMENT

Lito Zúñiga G. Pelaño

FOREWING and Eugene Domingo: The roots belong to them

Happiest movie of the summer

By Paul Dizon
Film Maker

AFTER A STRING OF repetitive, formulaic "filler" movies, how wonderful and refreshing it is to see the inventive new Star Cinema comedy, "D' Lucky Ones." A wacky story about two Filipinos—Lea Domingo and Tess Eugene Domingo—who share their obsession with the line for all seasons to cope with personal problems, "D' Lucky Ones" is one fun Tagalog movie that delivers exactly what it promises, and more. It's one merrily the happiest movie of the summer, it's the happiest movie of many months.

Much of the movie's pulse is a mirror of real-life lovers Gaudiano Park and Joseph Bitangcol. Based on audience reaction, however, the movie belongs to the two comedians sharing their distinct comic mettlers. Watching Bitangcol and Eugene have a grand jam time with their hilarious but straight-faced interpretations of drama icon Vilma Santos is truly one of the year's most unexpected pleasures.

In the wake of the semi-stalling author of Eugene Domingo and Bitangcol, the supporting cast barely has an opportunity to make an impression. Cristel Penaflorida's love line, in which she says that impressionist Jon Santos looks like Vilma but sounds like Ralph Recto, gives us a public laugh in the theater because it's been played to death in the TV sitcom, in a book titled "Twilight" release Lea and Tess are having sex. Hilarious doesn't ran above the story's limited demands on his character. He was far more effective as the sketch of Filipino in "Ang Dagdagbibigan Ni Maestro Obsesyon."

Press release aside, Gaudiano Park and Joseph Bitangcol have a

REVIEW

'D' Lucky Ones' dispenses jokes quickly and abundantly, making it easy for viewers to gloss over rough spots

MOVIES A2-3

Klownz 'fired' Sexbomb

Girls' manager says they didn't walk out on show

By Maricel R. Cruz

THE SEXBOMB GIRLS WERE kicked out of Klownz.

As the group's manager, I had to find work for my artists," Joe Cancio told business entertainment on Monday.

Cancio was responding to widespread talk that the Sexbomb Girls pulled up and brought down an ill-fated comedy bar in protest of their sudden dismissal to regular performance on the noontime television show "Eat... Bulaga!"

Klownz, located on Quezon Avenue, Quezon City, is partly owned by "Eat... Bulaga!" host Allan K. The Sexbomb girls used to perform there on Thursday nights.

"It was on a Thursday morning that I received a call from Tess (Quinquinto), saying the girls would not be performing at Klownz that night. Lito told me it was his decision," Cancio said.

Aligned into a Allan K's business partners and managers of Klownz and Dr. Lito Lim.

Calm acceptance

"I accepted the news calmly," Cancio continued. The next day, when a TV crew interviewed Allan K, he said we didn't show up. So I called up Joey and told him that I would then have to find work for the girls."

In an earlier interview on the news program "24 Oras," Allan K said he was saddened not only by the fact that the girls had closed down up but also by the news that they were fired at the top-rated comedy club Pasay Inn.

"The Sexbomb Girls are now regulars at Paparazzi and Lollibar, also in Quezon City.

"Why would we turn down an opportunity? When we were taken out of 'Bulaga,' the gig in Klownz was the only thing we had," said Sexbomb Mia Dungca then. "When we first found out we were jobless, everyone got scared—some even cried. That same night, my boy said, 'Don't worry, we'll find something.' That's how we got to perform at Pasay Inn. What does Klownz have to do with 'Bulaga?'"

Cancio said she would rather not discuss her role with Mishal Chua Bagay and Tony Tuason, executives of Tuason and Production Exponents Inc. (TAPE) and producers of the show on GMA-7.

Family feud

"I consider this a general among family members," she said. "I've apologized to them via text message to Mishal. Let's leave all this behind."

"We have no quarrel with the other hosts," added Rochelle Pangilinan, leader of the all-female group. "I talk with some of them regu-

KLOWNZ A2-3

SEXBOMB Dancers: Those boots are made for ...doing what to Allan K?

Beneficiaries seek status quo on MMFF pie

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

STATUS QUO.

This is the stand of the heads of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the Motion Picture Anti-Film Piracy Council Inc. regarding the reallocation of the Metro Manila Film Festival earnings.

"MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando told me that, since the new directors had been drafted without his consent or knowledge, he would appeal to Malacañang for a reconsideration (movie beheld)," Ric Cornelio, president of the council, told Inquirer Entertainment in an exclusive interview. "The MMDA chair is very affected of the MMFF."

"This was confirmed in an overseas phone interview with Fernando, who is currently celebrating in Egypt.

"I will bring the council's appeal to the attention of Malacañang," he reiterated.

Cornelio clarified his organization's stand: "We seek the maintenance of the original allocation."

In the new allocation, the council's share was slashed from the original 30 to 5 percent. The share of the Film Academy of the Philippines was cut from 30 to 10 percent.

Clarification

The share of the Movie Workers Welfare Foundation Inc. (MowelFoundation) was increased from 30 to 70 percent. Two new beneficiaries were added—the Optical Media Board (OMB) and the Film Development Council of the Philippines, with 10 percent each.

The President's Social Fund was also upped from 10 to 15 percent, with the provision that such "amount shall be used for film archives."

"Chairman Fernando was not clarification from Malacañang on to the definition of 'film archives' and as to who can top the special fund," Cornelio said.

In an emergency meeting held on March 28, Cornelio said the council officers, composed of producers and theater owners, recommend these adjustments.

He said he couldn't understand why the OMB had sought a share in the MMFF pie when the council had been providing it with a monthly stipend of P200,000 (of P2.4 million a year—a substantial part of the council's annual share of P8.5 million).

"The stipend provided OMB with an additional P480,000 last year," Cornelio noted. "We've cooperated with them. I don't see why we can't stick to the original arrangement."

Interest in 'Da Vinci Code,' the movie, starts to peak

FOR MONTHS NOW, FILM AND BUSINESS circles have been buzzing with speculations about the outlook and prospects of the movie version of Dan Brown's controversial novel, "The Da Vinci Code."

Based on set to open next month, interest in and even agitation over its screening has started to pick.

It has also been fueled by the recent Holy Week observance, which recalled the Passion of Jesus Christ, and the recently timed release last month of "The Gospel of Judas."

Since "Da Vinci" revealed the existence of the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, who in Brown's novel is placed in a romantic relationship with Jesus, the new revelation of Judas' own "gospel" adds further uneasiness to the "strange set, not so they seem" issue, biblically speaking, of the original controversy.

This has made the movie potentially even more controversial than the book—so that some Christian reviews are reportedly hesitant to adopt it here.

Another aspect here is that some groups are beyond the movie.

'Super-controversy'

If Opus Catholics' caution against such preemptive moves, because they could achieve the opposite effect. Instead of diminishing the movie's impact, it could increase that, because the attendant "super-controversy" would make it even more of a "must-see" film to many people's curiosity.

Rather, it is the religious (and Catholics) who the film should be shown first over other positions, and viewers should be free to react to it as they choose.

The Catholic reaction to the movie should be limited to evaluating it on point of facts and motive, so that the viewing public would be able to see the movie within the right context, and thus arrive at a more informed verdict about its key thematic points.

Of late, the issue of the film's nature is that, this episode has come to the fore in public dis-

MOVIES A2-3

VIEWFINDER

Nestor J. Torre

Will we get to see it ?

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Klownz 'fired' Sexbomb

From page A2-1

lady until now."

Cocoy also denied that the group has received offers from ABS-CBN. In fact, the 11th season ("Korean Idol") of their other show, kung-opera na ito GMA-7, "Daily Dose," will premiere on April 24.

Meeting with Charo!

"It's not true, either, that I had a meeting with Charo Santos-Concio. I'd have bragged about that, it's the kind of person that I am," Cocoy said. "Mother Lily (Monsod-wife) gave me with a box of Okay cocoa. I was in Dubai and I had the best biscuit."

Santos-Concio is ABS-CBN's executive vice president and manager.

Cocoy refused to discuss her falling out with former Sexbomb Sugar Mercado. A source close to both parties said the rift was due to Sugar's decision to sign a talent agreement with TMPK Inc. instead of renewing her contract with Cocoy's Rosa Entertainment Inc.

But Mia, the most outspoken member of the group, said her quarrel with Sugar began when the latter said her (Sugar) mother was estranging "mean things" about her. "They said I wasn't fit to be a dancer, that I should be working as a prostitute. I don't know why Sugar's mom is such a bitter woman. Maybe because I replaced Mira (Bernardo) as the

KLOWNZ A2-3

Interest in 'Da Vinci . . .

From page A2-1

cautions about the production. Brown and film director Ron Howard maintain that they are simply encouraging a review of early church history and the roots of the Christian faith. Thus, "Da Vinci" would never end up strengthening people's beliefs, should they survive the "interrogation."

On the other hand, some Biblical experts see in "Da Vinci" and "Judas" a concerted attack on Christian tenets, so element are urged to distinguish fact from clever conjecture, or intellectual persuasion.

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OPENS APRIL 26

Happiest movie of the summer

From page A1

long may to go before they can become the next Marvel Sections/Milliam Martinez tandem. Though Sandra Bullock appears more comfortable and relaxed here, compared to prior screen outings, her partner Joseph Stanguel looks like he's constantly acting, always aware of a camera recording his performance, killing any opportunities for spontaneity.

Good thing, though, that the jokes come quickly and abundantly, making it easy to gloss over other rough spots. More often than not, the manic, breathless pacing doesn't even give viewers enough time to giggle before the next joke is already being set up. It's as if the affiliates to "Pelikula Ng Isang Umaga" or "Dolce Stella L." there are speeds of more venue Ate Vi Moldenaers like "Aaah" and "Bata Bata Huwag Ka Umuwi" to younger viewers.

Under the assured direction of Brian Dennem, who spoofed Star Cinema's blockbusters in "Ang Tanging Ina" and also one minor Mona Lisa's classic flicks for more comedy gold, the gags in "If Lucky Ones" are more visual than verbal, relying more on performances than on scripted dialogue. Jaci setting Domingo and Helenang try to draw and look like their idol is enough to plant a smile on your face for minutes or a time. Still, there are some witty verbal gems, like Domingo's admission to Helenang that it's not true she kept a dumbbell while in high school ... because she never went to high school!

Frann is also in order for the sassy cinematography of Sherman Ko and Nancy Arcilla, the show-stopping costumes and production design for normalizing the movie's upbeat tone . Their work makes the world of "If Lucky Ones" look like it was shot from the point of view of a cheerful, optimistic child.

Credit should be given to writers Ron Collantes and Ted Boboyel, who had the smarts to use the main characters' love for Mona Lisa's movies not just as a gimmick, but as an integral part of the story. Nakangiti revelation to Jonathan about Sue Allen's movies helped her survive a terrible life in Korea was an unexpectedly moving insight on cinema's wonderful power to bring joy to the jaylos. Sue isn't that exactly what we need?

Klownz 'fired' Sexbomb

From page A1-C

dancer on the program's "TKO" segment. But that was a management decision, not because I'm anyone's favorite. I haven't met with Dogie since. So I want to see her? If we bumped into each other at this time, I don't think I'd even talk with her. Sadness lang."

Rochelle said she recently received a text message from Sugar. The message read: "Gud ata. Ate mabal ko po kayo. Alam ko po mag-sorpa kaya ay ahin. Sugar po kayo. Sori po sa abala. God bless. (I love all of you. I know you don't feel so good about me right now. Take care. Sorry for the bother.)"

"I have only one thing to ask her," said Rochelle. "Why? I'm not angry, just disappointed. It's tough on him. Sugar singled her out and we don't know why. Maybe because Mia is one of the group's leaders. Mia's strict. She might have offended Sugar, who's really really sensitive."

Gina Marissa Tapawan is head writer of "Pinoy Idol" Pot Boiler dancer. She also plays Jackie Jackie Rodriguez, Chester Jackie, Ethan Allanson and Ricky Sumrow.

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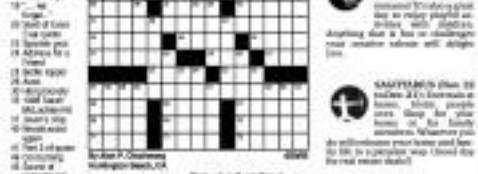

MARK Herras and Juanjoy's Marcado

'Star-struck' host . . .

Homepage A2-4

Ingrid Lanz Rokungwei and Edwin Tolentino, along with media and show biz celebrities and a bevy of beautiful people attended the scintillating event, after midnite, the day's Pass Hats Challenge mini-Olympics organd into the Dinner Social Party hosted by our EIC Steve Mills. Both events had a lot of excited participants, the winners received cash prizes! Kudos to DIVC's beverage department for coming up with yet another another way to quench our thirst!

Star tweets

Fr Lorna T: "Finally home last Monday after a month in the hospital. Thank you for the love & prayers. Pls continue to pray for Lindsay's complete recovery."

Fr Regine Tolentino: "I'm inviting all kids and teens to join my summer dance workshops on 17 Mar., 24 Mar., 31 Mar. 7, 14, 21, 28 & 5 in New Manila from April 19-28 and May 1-12. Participants will have a live TV recital on "Unang

ALTHEA Perez

Hour" on May 15. For details call 7250391."

Fr. Kaduat de Ejercito: "My new reality TV travel show with Francis Pajardo starts airing on April 25 after Pinoy Big Brother Teen Edition. Pls watch it!"

'E.T.K.'

I am serious and excited in equal parts to be the guest host on "E.T.K" this hot 10.00-1.00 (pm.). It will surely be a delight to swap show biz stories with Eric Tomenga and Dutch Jerry Reyes. So catch the show if you can.

Personal

Meet Amscomp in Boggie Fiesta and Bomop Bandes of Manila Studios Level Bar chats musicals and kitchen. Pardon is only an oasis in the heart of bustling Manila. My kids and I were able to recharge there during the Holy Week break. After a day at the Pavilion, you feel like a million!

(E-mail: amscomp hotmail.com, bomopbandes@yahoo.com.)

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9 ICE AGE 2
10 MOMENTS OF LOVE

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5 EIGHT BELOW

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2 PAMAHIN
3 D' LUCKY ONES
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2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
4 EIGHT BELOW

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2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 EIGHT BELOW
4 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

STARMILLS

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2 PAMAHIN
3 D' LUCKY ONES
4 EIGHT BELOW
5 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
6 BASIC INSTINCT 2

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3 PAMAHIN
4 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
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5 EIGHT BELOW
6 MANNY MCPHEE

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ENTERTAINMENT

'Starstruck' host star-struck in New York

REBONG Mutya, Benito Guerra and Julius in a Soho restaurant.

DOLLY WOOD
Daily Arts Contributor

IN SPITE OF ALL THE FAME, JULIAN Magdangal is enjoying, she says, quite childlike. Julian relishes simple joys.

She cited this test to see if the soap from the Big Apple where she is shooting for her last episodic TV series, "I Love New York," with Marvin Agustin, Jennylyn Mercado and Mark Herras. "My boyfriend belongs in I were in Soho. I mean boom on that. I wouldn't look too small beside him but if I were in Soho I would be buying lobster (the J couldn't cope with it) but then walking to a loaded up buying slippers in change in. Relaxing, goods up Soho. In artsy! We went to a small store to have wine. Order I almost fainted when I saw Emilio Estevez (smile)! Major pictures in Jaga-lomed. So nice magnificent! Isn't it cute that the bubbly host of "Starstruck" was starstruck Soho!!!

Jennylyn Mercado will have a birthday concert on May 13 at Music Museum—"The Music in Me," with guests Jessa Gibbs, Alex Inguanta, Mark Herras and Rafi. It will be her first venture as a producer. Will she finally reveal her special someone in non-show biz guy during the concert? Jen is also set to open her boutique, featuring her own fashion line, "Mr. Jennylyn" at Iron Mall on May 27. Many guys are there dreams of making her "Mrs. Jen" but that will have to wait. This time pretty miss does not want to miss out on all the opportunities free to throwing her wares.

Just asking

Is it true that a young actor took a video of JK getting wild with a girl when he had a few too many in a Boracay bar last Holy Week? Will the "8 & 9 Prince" be 8 and 9 about it—retirement and bliss?

Aliya Perez Bere is the DJ in visit Sur behoved Times of "South Border." The band is on a tour of the States. Does that mean his wife and two kids are already out of the picture? Friend claim Grace is seeking annulment. Marriage without love or love without marriage?

Dawn newscaster Michael Rajahn knew that a video of his blooper is circulating on the internet and cell phones? That's bad news for any news presenter!

Toast on Boro

The long, hot summer brought everyone out to the country's famous beach, Boracay. In drama, One conditioning event on the world-famous island was forever vacation was the launch of UBC's Toast—The Cocoa Tea with a PAL UBC

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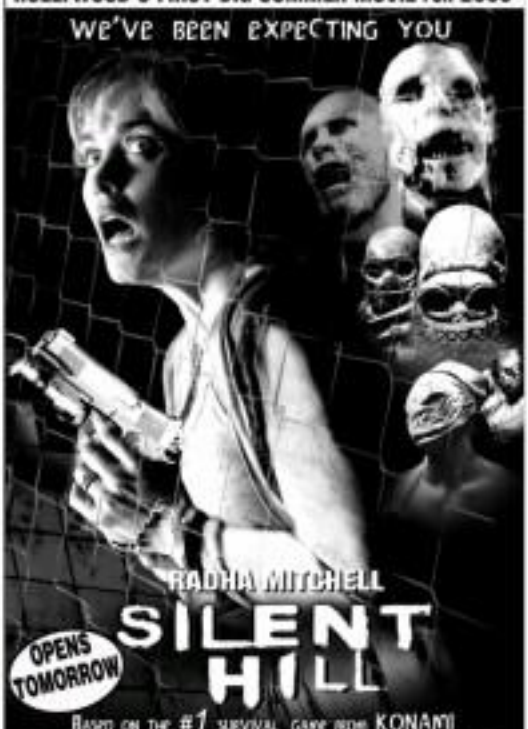

Fun Savers Club

BUSINESS

Editor Raul D. Marcelo • Associate Editor Corrie S. Mariano

XTRA

Peso seen strengthening to 48 to $1

RACHEL Sabonis earns P11 for every meter of dyed-to-their-that she weaves on a placemat. She and the other women make table runners, bags, curtains, wall hangers and other items using Palamas's tulip press iron. LIMAR JAN

Forex traders say worst is over on fiscal front

By Doris C. Dumlao

FOREIGN EXCHANGE TRADERS ARE BULLISH ON THE PESO DESPITE skyrocketing oil prices, believing the worst is over on the fiscal front and the government is in a much better financial position to boost infrastructure spending.

In a poll taken yesterday, ING Philippines president and Banco de Oro Private Bank treasurer Jose Emmanuel Rilloda said since the "political threat" has been settled and shutter returns set in motion, the peso could rise further to 48 to 49 to a dollar.

"We used to be called the Argentina of Asia because we were following Argentina's predecessor debt path. Now, we have shaken that tag off and emerged as the new darling of the global financial market. Everybody is very upbeat on the Philippines," he said.

ING, a Paris-based global association of insurance makers from 55 countries, will hold its 48th World Congress at the Philippine International Convention Center on May 25-27. The event is expected to draw about 500 foreign and local financial market leaders.

ING World Congress 2006 chair Jose Arnulfo Velasco, treasurer at HSBC Philippines, said the peso had remained steady despite the political disturbances in the past weeks.

"This signifies the growing confidence of investors in the Philippine financial markets, much of which is a result of the government's bullish attitude when it comes to solving the fiscal crisis," Velasco said.

The HSBC treasurer, who had predicted that the peso would surge further to 47.50-50, said the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas might even tolerate a stronger peso because this was a way to curb inflationary pressures by offsetting the adverse impact of rising oil import bill.

Velasco said the peso's upward was supported

PESO B2

CURRENCIES

GOLD

STOCK MARKET

Stocks slip on profit-taking

STOCKS DIPPED SLIGHTLY yesterday as profit-taking hurt the index to ... The index is set to fix higher ... by buying in blue chips.

Some traders said Bangkok's decline for the second session in a row indicated the market was holding steady for a sustainable rally.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index declined 1.38 points, or 0.1 percent, to 2,203.73 after shedding 0.2 percent on Tuesday. It was Monday's to its highest in two weeks.

STOCKS B2

WHAT'S INSIDE

Expanded VAT nets P12.1B B2

BREAKTIME Drunken sealer B3

Regulators agree to share info to protect investors B4

Minimum capital for new insurers raised to P1B

THE INSURANCE COMMISSION has approved an increase in the minimum capitalization for all new insurance players to P1 billion to ensure that only strong players would join the industry.

The minimum capital for a non-life insurer previously stood at only P50 million and for life insurers, P100 million.

At the sidelines of the Financial Sector Forum yesterday, Insurance Commissioner Evangeline Escobillo said the P1 billion minimum capitalization, to take effect on July 1, was supported by the insurance industry.

Of the P1 billion, half should be paid up while the other half should be in the form of contributed surplus such as preferred stocks, Escobillo said. The new minimum capitalization was much higher than the benchmarks for stand-alone life and non-life insurers earlier considered, the highest of which was only P500 million.

Escobillo said a new player would need sufficient capital primarily to build up its underwriting and distribution channel, make a lot of investments and comply with the new International Accounting Standards.

"When we made financial computations for a company to grow and develop distribution and reinsurance capacity and protection of proper solvency

INSURANCE B2

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MIZUNO

Expanded VAT nets ₱12.1B

Gov't sees higher collection in coming months

By Michelle V Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT COLLECTED ₱12.1 billion in additional revenues from the VAT Reform Law in the three months since its implementation in November last year, the Department of Finance announced yesterday.

The VAT law, considered the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform program, expanded the coverage of the value-added tax to include oil and electricity, among others. It has also raised since Feb. 1 the tax rate to 12 percent from 10 percent.

Of the total additional collections, the Bureau of Internal Revenue accounted for ₱11.3 billion while the Bureau of Customs contributed ₱0.8 billion.

The DOF said in a report that gross collections from the VAT Reform Law for the November to February period stood at ₱15.5 billion, but that the amount was trimmed to ₱12.1 billion because of the implementation of measures to mitigate the impact of the tax measure on consumers' purchasing power.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said some ₱3.4 billion worth of potential revenue collection was foregone due to the mitigating measures. He said the reduction of excise tax on petroleum products led to ₱1.6 billion worth of lost potential revenues, while the repeal of the franchise tax on power distribution resulted in ₱700 million in reduced taxes. The lifting of the common carrier tax on domestic transport led to ₱95.1 million in foregone revenues, he added.

The Arroyo administration has vowed that the tax measures would deliver ₱70 billion in additional revenues for the whole of 2006 alone. Proceeds of the new VAT law are intended to boost the government's chances of wiping out the government's budget deficit by 2008 and increase spending on infrastructure and social services.

Despite collections from consumer groups and some members of the legislature, the administration's economic officials have stood behind the tax measures until its enactment into law, giving the promise that it would substantially help in putting the country's fiscal house in order.

However, meeting the full year target of ₱70 billion seems not too easy for the government. In the January-February period alone, combined collections of the BIR and Customs stood at only ₱7.6 billion, slightly missing the ₱7.7 billion target set for the first two months to keep the government on track of the full year goal.

But Beltran expressed optimism that the collections from the new VAT law would increase in the next few months as the BIR implements tighter tax enforcement schemes.

The government's ability to collect the expected revenues from the VAT Reform Law is tightly watched by the country's creditors, investors and credit-rating agencies.

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Drunken sealer

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Bansil III

TWICE IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS, THE SM group of mall operator Henry by actually offered to buy the pension fund GSIS out of the spin-for-the-picking Equitable PCI Bank.

The SM group also offered to pay for the GSIS holdings in EPCIB a bonanza price of ₱92 a share. That was in November last year.

Only a few weeks ago, however, as the SM group's overtures began for EPCIB became public knowledge, it raised the offer price to ₱95 a share.

Apparently, as early as November last year, the SM group began to woo President Arroyo Tan was negotiating with Garcia on the buyout at such a fantastic price.

Subsequently, as the boss turned up on the SM group's plan, it again offered to buy out EPCIB at ₱95 a share—cash, payable in one year.

And as Garcia neared the end of his tenure and offered to buy out the SM group under the same terms. The group said, sure, but payable in six months, which is shortened to three months, which in turn became one month.

In short, the SM group did not want to sell out, it only wanted to take over EPCIB by hook or by crook—or by political clout, and by monetary considerations.

To me, as I follow this SM group's attempt to gain control over an institution of the pension funds, Garcia's keeping a bottomless pit.

Watch out, boss, because the SM group's recent efforts are the "novel" that GSIS president and general manager Garcia intends to reveal to the public soonest.

By divulging some more secrets to the public, Garcia perhaps intends to put the "black dogs" of the SM group on the defensive.

* * *

AS REMINDED! Rumors, except perhaps those people in Malacañang, the SM group launched a different PR line of attack against Garcia.

It tried to shoot down Garcia's supposed deal with the "secret" buyer of the billions of pesos worth of GSIS holdings in EPCIB.

In effect, the PR line projected Garcia as a "duffer." You know—that he really had no buyer, and if there indeed was one, that is must be a "dreaded" buyer.

Well, Garcia said that the buyer was willing to pay for the EPCIB shares of GSIS a price of ₱92 a share—CASH!

That was indeed a fantastic price...at least compared to the SM group's pricing for EPCIB shares.

In the SM group's scheme in which its finance do its takeo-takeo over EPCIB, by calling it a "merger," the SM group offered a valuation price of ₱56 per EPCIB share—to be paid for with BDO shares.

Before the now-famous presidential election in 2004, the SM group also tried to buy out EPCIB shares at the "bulkier" pension fund SSS at a bargain price of ₱40 each.

And so how dare that Cebu hometown boy Garcia claim that he had a buyer for the GSIS shares in EPCIB at ₱92 per? It must be a drunken sealer or something.

* * *

NOW GARCIA stands in the way of Henry Sy's daughter Tessie by Garcia's bid to take over the country's biggest bank EPCIBwhich is using, by "merging" it with the Philippine BDO.

But Garcia figured out—correctly, I must say—that under the scheme of Tessie by Go-

Benguet coal project attracts investors

By Christine A. Galicia

INVESTOR GROUPS LED BY KOREA ELECTRIC Power Corp. (Kepco) have signified interest in Benguet Corp.'s Batangas coal project, a company official said.

The project, currently under exploration with an estimated coal reserve of 35.7 million metric tons, has caught the interest of several investors, Benguet President Philip Romualdez said in an interview.

"There are now preliminary discussions with these groups but we are carefully reviewing them all," he said.

Romualdez noted that the Batangas coal project was still "prime for additional exploration activities supported by strong support's promotion of coal-fired (power) plants."

"As crude oil prices remain high, properties like the Batangas coal tenure become increasingly valuable as we have seen in the case of Semirara Mining Corp.," he added.

Meanwhile, Benguet has also signed a memorandum of agreement with Erasmo Miguelo Inc., which controls the biggest nickel and cobalt properties in the Zambales area.

The agreement will promote the full exploration and development of Benguet's and Erasmo's combined resources either through joint or the entry of joint venture partners.

The nickel project has been approved by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Bureau of Mines and Geosciences for implementation through a mineral production sharing agreement (MPSA), which limits ownership to local companies.

Benguet has several new mineral prospects in Luzon and in Mindanao that would revive the glitter of the 100-year-old mining company that pioneered the modern gold mining operations in the country.

Known as the biggest gold mining company in the Philippines and the 16th biggest in the world, Benguet Corp. has its existing chromite operation in Masinloc, Zambales, known commercially as "Masinloc Ore," and is highly profitable. Rizon Copper-Gold operation in San Marcelino, Zambales

Stocks slip on profit-taking

From page B1

"The market is consolidating with the mining and oil sectors taking a breather," said Philippine Dealer Equities chair Manuel Macapagal.

Macapagal said he believed the market's upward trend remained intact given favorable economic fundamentals and technical factors.

Last Tuesday, President Macapagal-Arroyo said some revenue collection in the first quarter was stronger than last year, which bodes well for the government's campaign to improve its financial position.

That is important for efforts to bring down domestic interest rates, especially amid renewed upward pressure on global oil prices, which rose to record highs earlier this week. AP

Peso seen strengthening . . .

From page B1

ed by the positive story on Philippine fiscal consolidation, which should have more investors since the tail-end of the US Federal Reserve's cycle of interest rate increases would prompt fund managers to look for better investment returns in emerging markets.

According to Hilado, the peso's sustained strength since last year has been instrumental in take the Philippines more seriously despite all the political bickering. "Our foreign exchange rate has continuously declined from the 59 level in 1999 due to fiscal crisis and political instability, but today, from all indications, it looks like political instability no longer affects the fiscal industry," he said.

Tetsuo and Hilado said the financial markets would like to see the government not simply keeping the budget deficits in check but boosting up more funds for infrastructure in order to boost the investment climate.

"Before, the reason why they were able to contain the deficit was they cut expenses, but if they cut expenses, you hurt the economy," Hilado said.

"The most greatest challenge is how the government can increase government spending to pick up the economy," he said.

Despite the overwhelming political noise in the Philippines, the peso hit three-and-a-half year highs and peaked at 55.80-85 as the day ran.

"This is a positive sign that the currency markets have matured and are behaving more like markets in more advanced countries," Hilado

Fair trade advocates call for clear policy on duties

By Rosvel M. Domingo

THE UMBRELLA GROUP OF fair trade advocates and industries yesterday asked Congress to enjoin the government for a clear policy on the World Trade Organization talks in Geneva that started yesterday.

The Fair Trade Alliance, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Federation of Philippine Industries, Philippine Exporters' Foundation and Alyansa Agrikultura said in a press briefing they wanted the duties applied in the country to be as far as possible from the maximum tariffs allowed under WTO rules.

In this way, the alliance said the government would have the maximum flexibility possible to increase tariffs to a level suited to the country's needs without being constrained by WTO-bound rates.

The maximum duties allowed by the WTO are referred to as "bound" rates, while the difference between the bound and applied rates is called "policy space."

The bigger the space, the greater the flexibility in the government to adjust rates.

The alliance said the average applied rate for Philippine products is non-agricultural market access was 7 percent while the bound rate was 23 percent.

"We want the minimum to be 10 percent for non-agricultural products, but our officials seem to be willing to accept a minimum of 5 percent," said Ernesto M. Ordonez, head of Alyansa Agrikultura.

Negotiations are in Geneva where talks on NAMA (non-agricultural market access) covering sectors such as fisheries, forestry, petrochemicals, iron and steel and automotive parts.

Ordonez and advocates were displeased with the apparent stalemate of preferential negotiations of emerging value chain exports to the maximum number of products special been tariff-free.

"There are about 5,000 Philippine products covered by the NAMA talks under the sectors want at least 100 tariff lines to be part of the exclusion list.

"We feel certain that there would not be revenue loss by tariff cuts.

PEI chairman Wilfredo Tolentino said the people "felt disturbed" that briefings conducted by the Department of Trade and Industry for business and civil society representatives covered only the identification of which products should go into the sensitive list and the black "tariff-quota" would be used in the so-called Swiss formula.

The Department of Trade and Industry for business and civil society representatives covered only the identification of which products should go into the sensitive list and the black "tariff-quota" would be used in the so-called Swiss formula.

The meetings and the formula would determine the number of tariff cuts.

Earlier this month, PEI and negotiators should take a stronger stance on keeping as much policy space as possible in relation to GATS tariff cuts.

FLI registers 11% rise in net income

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PROPERTY FIRM FILINVEST Land Inc. posted an 11 percent increase in its net income to P663 million in 2005, according to a preliminary information statement filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

FLI said sales grew 7 percent from projects of FLI's middle income and Crimbuddy, such as Spring Residences in Quezon City, Seven Mosaic Villas also in Quezon City and Pasadeo de Vista de Alcalde in Cebu.

Some of its projects under its affordable and subsidized segment like Brookside Lake Cebu, Del Aire and Bellevue Townhomes, all in Cebu, likewise performed well, the company said in its report to regulators.

New projects launched last year also performed well, the company claimed.

Major reasons cited for the favorable performance were all service pricing, continuous market, up sales drive, promotions and incentives offered to both buyers and sellers, availability of financing packages and the positive market reception to home models.

Filinvest Development Corp., which owns 44.7 percent of FLI, is the secondary, and set its sales target to 20 percent growth to P725 million in 2006.

Globe widens Wi-Fi reach

By Dante L. Lanza

A UNIT OF ayala-owned Globe Telecom Inc. has embarked on an aggressive campaign to expand its wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) service nationwide.

The Wi-Fi service allows users to connect wirelessly to the Internet in designated areas.

GlobeQUEST, the corporate business group of Globe subsidiary Innove Communications, at the same time established four domestic and international roaming partnerships that would allow wireless Internet connectivity to business travelers in the country and abroad.

The broadband campaign is part of the telecom firm's thrust into new revenue streams that would help it overcome phone-ing demand for its mobile phone business.

"Exposure is critical as we bring the Filipinos to the broadband age," GlobeQUEST head Jesus C. Romero said in a statement.

"To support this, GlobeQUEST provides broadband facilities like Wi-Fi to major key establishments where people congregate for business, as well as promote Wi-Fi as a strategic tool for education, local government projects, product advertisements, and foreign exchange transactions."

GlobeQUEST has expanded to provide coverage in Metro Manila as well as 15 areas beyond Metro Manila namely Cebu, Davao, Bohol, Bacolod, Tacloban, Pampanga, General Santos, Baguio, Olongapo, Cavite, Batangas, Legaspi and Ormoc.

So far, the company has 275 wireless hotspots, or "hotspots."

Romero expressed confidence that the company would reach the 500 mark by yearend.

Lafayette seeks OK for trial runs

LAFAYETTE'S RAPU RAPU POLYMETALLIC project is seeking for government permission to test its pollution-control safeguards.

Lafayette chairman and president Carlos G. Dominguez said the new copper plant of Rapu Rapu Processing Inc., a Lafayette subsidiary, has installed all the required pollution-control measures.

"But we need to test the whole process, which is standard practice all over the world, to make sure all systems are up and running to indicate expected outcomes," he said.

Dominguez, who took over the management of Lafayette last January, has been during the test runs would be open to all stakeholders and concerned parties.

He added that the company has already found ways to improve the quality of life in its host communities and spark economic growth in the Southern Tagalog region.

The company expects to spend about P220 million each year just to buy supplies, including groceries, fish, and meat, from local businesses.

"We can do more and we are doing more. We are using resources, thus we shall have the funds to implement our plans to really transform the community," he said.

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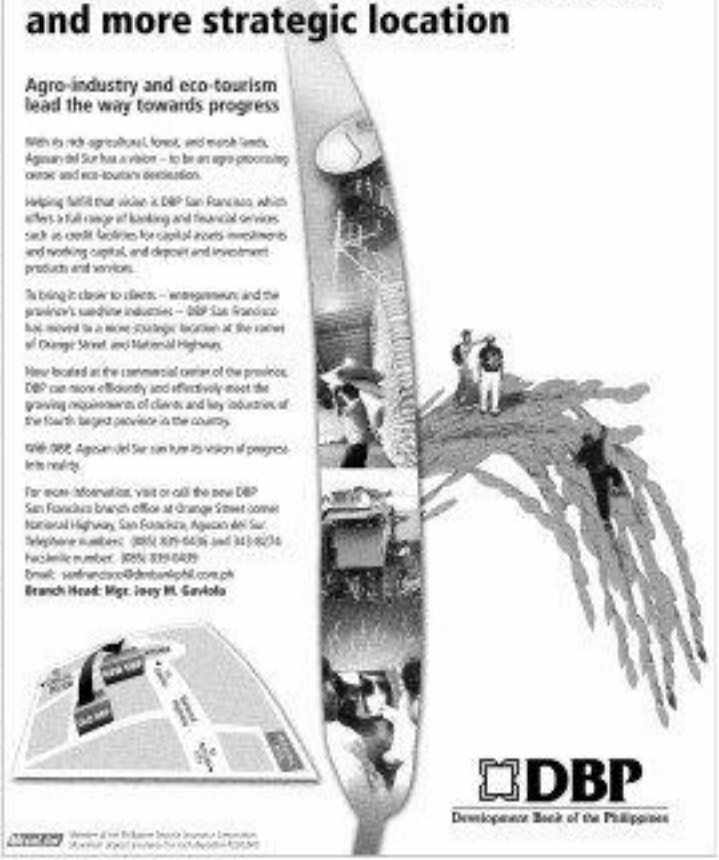

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Big investors seen cornering RTBs

Tanduay income up 12% in '05

LIQUOR FIRM TANDUAY HOLDINGS Inc. said its consolidated net income grew 12 percent to P136 million in 2005 from P668 million the previous year.

In a report to the Securities and Exchange Commission, the company said consolidated revenues 1 percent to P6.8 billion in 2005 from P6.76 billion in 2004.

An 8.6-percent rise in its average selling prices boosted revenues, it said. The volume of liquor sales, however, slid by 1.2 million cases or 7.5 percent.

The increasing prices of goods due to the doing east of fuel contributed to the weakening of demand for rum.

Cost of sales rose 1 percent to P5.3 billion in 2005 from P5.1 billion in 2004 due to an 11-percent increase in the cost of alcohol and packaging materials.

Operating expenses climbed 5 percent to P847 million due to higher advertising expenses for the promotion of the Five-year-based, Canadian Vodka and Gravesen Brandy.

At the parent company level, net income swelled to P1.8 billion from P629 million. Revenues—consisting of dividend income, management fees and interest—surged to P1.8 billion in 2005 from P608 million in 2004. Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM unit posts 23% profit growth

SM DEVELOPMENT CORP, THE BUSINESS real property developer of retail tycoon Henry Sy, Sr., has posted a 23 percent growth in consolidated net income to P652 million in 2003 from P528 million in 2004.

In a report, the company said total revenue grew 19.6 percent to P867 million from 2004's P725.4 million. Gains on investments worth P59.8 million, it said, contributed to the surge in revenue during the year. Sales from real estate, which accounted for 25 percent of the total revenue, increased by 2.6 percent to P229 million.

Interest expenses of its wholly-owned SM Synergy Properties Holdings Corp. rose 44 percent to P25 million due to higher loans.

SM Synergy was formed to develop the 6.7-hectare mixed-use residential condominiums in Delta Subdivision Avenue Extension in Bicutan, Parañaque City dubbed Charisma Home.

Taxes and license fees paid after tax rose to P9.2 million or a 245-percent increase year-on-year due to a disputed idle land tax paid for a Tagaytay property and bigger local business taxes incurred during the year.

The company owns a parcel of land in Tagaytay City with an area of 35,498 square meters. The owner he was purchased at P394.6 million. Elizabeth L. Sanchez

BSP urges Treasury to tighten monitoring of bonds distribution

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS (BSP) ASKED the Bureau of the Treasury to tighten the monitoring of the distribution of retail treasury bonds (RTBs) as it raised concerns that only a few small investors were able to avail themselves of these bonds.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said more than 80 percent of the RTBs issued by the government were being held by big and institutional investors—including banks, government-owned and -controlled corporations, and private corporations—and that only less than 20 percent were held by small investors.

"Since these are retail bonds and are meant to be held by small investors, the Monetary Board would like the Bureau of Treasury to closely monitor and improve the distribution of RTBs to ensure that these are sold to small investors," Guinigundo said in a letter to Ma. Cristal Tesoro-Omar Cruz.

RTBs, unlike other government securities, are intended for small investors to boost small businesses and encourage investments by individuals. The minimum allowable investment in RTBs is P5,000.

However, the BSP said, the purpose of issuing RTBs might be defeated, given that big investors were the ones holding the bulk of the RTBs issued.

In September last year, the Bureau of the Treasury sold P44.27 billion worth of RTBs to help plug a gaping budget deficit and, at the same time, provide investments opportunity for small investors.

Last year's budget deficit of the national government stood at P146.43 billion.

The issuance of RTBs last year was done following a directive from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to mobilize savings and investments.

In response to the BSP's concerns, Tesoro-Omar of the Treasury said that while it was the intention of the government to distribute the bulk of the retail bonds to small investors, distribution this notice was not enough.

"You can't give it all to retail investors because the absorptive capacity is not there," Cruz explained.

But he admitted that the RTB holdings of small investors were not as small as the BSP suspects. He said many big investors eventually retailed the RTBs they got by selling them to small investors.

SMC special unit offers hybrid securities

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SAN MIGUEL CAPITAL FUNDING LTD., A Cayman Islands-registered special purpose unit owned by food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp., will issue hybrid securities this month to raise fresh funds for the parent firm, business sources said.

While the size of the offering has yet to be set, the benchmark issue may be at least $100 million, the sources said.

In a separate disclosure, San Miguel chairman Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. said SMCF was planning to issue "a broad-ranging offering of perpetual non-cumulative, non-voting preferred shares," which were "callable" in can be paid in five years.

The hybrid securities would be a mix of debt and equity, which put a fixed return that will be sent back but is perpetual or has no fixed maturity.

Four foreign banks—Citigroup Global Markets Limited, Credit Suisse Securities (Europe) Limited, Deutsche Bank AG, Singapore Branch, and The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp. Ltd.—were tapped as joint book-runners and lead managers for the offering.

Proceeds from the offering will be loan to SMC at a 30-year term company loan.

Industry sources said SMC would use the new loan to refinance existing loans.

In its third quarter financial report, San Miguel said its loans payable stood at P91.28 billion during the nine-month period in 2003, an increase of P63.3 billion from year-ago level. This was because of the bridge financing used by the company to acquire National Foods Ltd., and the additional borrowings for working capital requirements and improvement of Ginebra San Miguel's long-term loans.

Investors said a roadshow for the issue was scheduled for today in Manila and Singapore, and Friday in Hong Kong.

The issue will be marketed to investors in Zurich and London next week. Pricing may also be done early next week, sources added.

In the meantime, certain wire agencies reported that Moody's investors Service has assigned a P3-bn foreign currency rating to the proposed preferred stock to issuer of SMCF.

Moody's also assigned a Ba1 local currency corporate family and indicative foreign currency issuer unsecured ratings to SMC. This is the first time Moody's has assigned ratings to SMC.

"The Ba1 local currency corporate family rating reflects the size, diversity and profitability of San Miguel's operations, which encompass alcoholic beverages and soft drinks, food and packaging activities in the Philippines and as well as food and beverage operations in Australia," said Charles Macgregor, vice president and senior credit officer at Moody's, in a statement.

Putting numbers to good use

DURING THE INCEPTION PROCEDURES involved in the emission testing of motor vehicles, the importance of IT or information technology component is being repeated over and over.

The results of the emission testing done by all the private emission test centers nationwide are being uploaded to a central database. The Land Transportation Office and other concerned departments will have full access to this reliable data.

In my years of involvement in advocacy work, I had developed a love affair with numbers. This is because numbers are numbers and you have very little ground for quarrel about that. Numbers are significant tools in any advocacy endeavor because of the many interesting stories behind them. The stories vary and the degree of their values largely depend on how we use and interpret them.

Transportation Undersecretary Ricky Alfonso used the PETC database in good use—particularly in the analysis of the performance of the different emission centers and in marking down anomalous testing measurements.

Emission testing performance

There are some relevant stories that these numbers can tell. The LTO, under Transportation Secretary Arthur C. Leon Guerrero, can use this data to parallel and call the attention of some LTO district officers who refuse to respect the law. This database when compared with the no and vehicle registration transactions of LTO will tell Atty. Leon Guerrero and many that there are many of these officers who, especially in less-urbanized cities and provinces, that think they are "above the law." These are the LTO officers that allow their offices to release registration certificates even without the mandatory emission testing. I am saying this because there are other provinces and outlying areas in Mindanao are so far away from the LTO of Imperial Manila. The numbers should be a cause for alarm. Some LTO people think they can afford to be complacent about air pollution concerns as they think these concerns are not as bad as problems in their areas. They think the air in their areas is not as dirty as that in Manila as they have fewer motor vehicles and larger tracts of land. They may be wrong for now but if we don't watch out, we will become the Manila mess.

Threats of air pollution

The increasing level of air pollution is threatening the well-being of city dwellers, as it impacts on human health, and imposing direct economic cost. It also threatens long-term productivity investments.

Davao City has been classified as one of the TOP (most suspended particulates) hot spots in the country having a high concentration of air pollutants in its environment.

According to a World Bank report, the estimated damage to human health—in terms of resulting deaths, chronic bronchitis, respiratory symptoms and cost of exposure to air pollution—in Davao City is the second highest among four cities at $83 million. Metro Manila is first with $2[illegible] million while the third and fourth are Cebu, $10 million, and Baguio, $9 million.

The 2002 National Air Quality Status Report would show that in five of the seven previous years, two cities in Mindanao exceeded or equaled the highest Metro Manila annual readings—Davao and Tagum in 1998 and Davao, again, in 1999.

This should need our serious attention and show how air pollution threatens the well-being of Mindanaweans.

Street pollution sources

Transport is a major source of air pollution. In 2003, there were 4.3 million registered vehicles in the country—86 percent are utility vehicles; 17 percent, cars; 6 percent, cycles; 1 percent, buses; 1 percent, trailers, and 26 percent, motorcycles and mopeds. Of all vehicles, 70 percent are gasoline-powered while the rest are diesel. Most of high mileage PUVs are diesel-powered and they emit a significant amount of fine particles of emissions that cause pollution. PUVs commuters can by a ratio of 3:1.

In Mindanao, there were 609,817 registered vehicles in 2003 and 635,047 in 2004, or an annual growth of 11.45 percent. The population of Mindanao was projected to reach 20.289 million in 2005, growing by 1.11 percent annually.

Starting last year, the Mindanao LTO compliance ratings on mandatory emission testing as a prerequisite to vehicle registration range from a low of 48 percent to a high of 99 percent. A low is a low—so compliance must be 100 percent, don't you think so?

In 2003, the Metro Manila Development Authority conducted road side inspections and apprehensions of smoke-belchers. Some 8,470 utility vehicles, 4,236 buses, 1,334 jeepneys were apprehended. Guess what? 95.6 percent of the utility vehicles, 91.8 percent buses and 98.1 percent jeepneys failed!

Other mechanisms

Aside from strict compliance with the emission testing requirements for motor vehicles, there are other equally important support mechanisms to ensure cleaner air for us in Mindanao. One of these is a locally initiated roadside inspection and apprehension of smoke belchers by the CGU, LTO, BOTC, media and NGO similar to what DMDA did. This, I believe, will help clean the air in our major thoroughfares.

The LTO database should also be used to examine the performance of the LTO operators of MVIS (Motor Vehicle Inspection System)—the entity that conducts emission testing of PUVs. These numbers will show or whether the MVIS is doing a good or a lousy job in testing the PUVs. These numbers can also tell us the compliance rating of the LTO of them.

Using these numbers might be our only hope to reward the good and to punish the bad. Behavior will be a matter of choice—it can be used for the good of the greatest majority or for the survival of the few.

(E-mail comments to [illegible]@yahoo.com)

Minimum capital . . .

From page B1

every a company must have P1 billion," Bautista said.

For existing companies, Bautista said the insurance agency would introduce a risk-based capital. [illegible] requirement effective July 1.

"For life, there are four major components in assessing or valuing required capital in accordance with the risk projects, the biggest of which is asset deposit, then product pricing, interest rate sensitivity and operational risk," Bautista said.

This is based on a formula which divides the capital by the risk base. Boris C. Domino

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Lizzy Brian Espinosa

Modern retail taps into PLDT Business Solutions

ONCE AGAIN, IT WAS AN EUREKA-ing moment when the made in way through PLDT Innovation, matching inquiries to solutions at different cutting-edge business solutions were revealed. This time the Philippine Franchise Association (PFA) outlined dozens attendees (individuals with/part-sized PLDT subscribers).

From end to end of a veritable hall of fairs, PFA members first looked upon displays of great groundbreaking PLDT products and advancements, as well as their contributions to national development. After this exploration, members had the chance to mind the contents.

PFA president Robert Sycip said (in an interview with STOP!) Mobil Business Network (MCN) workstations, as well as all center applications at PLDT Innovation. He cited the growing importance of contact centers for Customer Service Management (CSM) among retail franchises. Full time customer service quality is a key differentiator among food franchises for example, even those with "different pesh issues".

"The combination innovation, business training, and development determine what goes out to the market. The different solutions are built around the business dispensation," added PLDT PAP for business solutions Brainer Bonoan.

As an organization, PFA aims to promote franchising as a tool for national development, as well as identify assist, and develop local and Medium Enterprises (SME's) with the potential to franchise. On July 11 to 16, PLDT Business Solutions will further reinforce its support to the PFA by co-presenting the 2006 Philippine International Franchise Conference and Expo. PLDT Business Solutions partnership with the PFA has continued over the years and is getting stronger.

PLDT AVP for corporate business group Eric B. Alberto explained the "Progressive retailers know very well when the critical value of technology is. They know that a sale can only hearty on a mere deal of a business and that is the day and age of information and technology could make innovations are the only way to go."

"Embracing and implementing technology as part and parcel of a retailer's business process, no longer becomes a choice but has now become an imperative. Go to retail giant's strategic survival, and globally combined trending competitors have proved that the use of technology has not only enriched their customer's in-store experience but also enabled them to build a loyal and viable customer base."

Alberto also promised on the retailers. "A good news is that "these technologies are now available at your fingertips from PLDT Business Solutions."

TOYOTA SERVICE SKILLS OLYMPICS

Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. recently honored its top service advisors and general job holders during the annual Toyota Service Skills Olympics at its training/meeting place in Santa Rosa City in Laguna. Service advisors and general job holders from dealerships throughout the country participated with one another to showcase their skills. This annual event shows that Toyota produces not only the best cars in the world, but also the best service advisors and parts and technicians in the industry. "This annual competition is also an avenue for Toyota customers to pick out the dealers that have set service skills and to enhance customer service attitude that they want their dealer leaders to define, now in the 21st century. Toyota always elevates the value of achieving the highest level of technical and customer service skills among all Toyota dealerships, including dealer technicians and service advisors. One is the training program and participation from its dealer network. Toyota has to boast the highest rate in automotive dealer service in the Philippines to the tested JD Power Customer Satisfaction Index Survey for best customer service.

ABS-CBN'S SAGIP KAPAMILYA GARNERS AN ANVIL

ABS-CBN was presented for government, corporate other a outstanding volunteers Black Eyeness (middle) receives the Anvil Award of Merit for ABS-CBN Foundation (accepting Sagip Kapamilya chairman Ed Tan) Anvil awards of the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP) held recently at the Hotel Intercontinental Manila. Sagip Kapamilya is the program launched by ABS-CBN in response to the devastation brought about by major typhoons in 2004. Above photo (clockwise) MVI Anvil Awards committee chair Joel Lucasmoreno, Ferdi Sandoz (in ashmen and former PRSP president Bert Pangan), displayers of the board of judges, Jocelyn Rodolfo Valdez, and PRSP president Amylyn de Guzman.

The Westwood Lane: A world-class community in Pasig City

THE LAST AVAILABLE FRONT CLASS REDdetached houses in Valle Verde II, The Westwood Lane at No. 14 Firefly Street is a metropolitan community of 22 residential units—four duplex and five single-detached.

Each one of these units was living dual, gated and controlled planned to make the most out of every inch of space. There are three bedrooms, each two rooms with toilet and bath in each of the upper levels, and one maid's room and toilet and bath at the basement. There's a 2-car garage in the single-detached and a two-car garage in the duplex units. The landry area, dirty kitchen and pantry are also in the basement.

The ground floor is a showcase of elegance, from its welcoming mini garden to its high ceiling, spacious interior — a relaxing foyer, a dining room with a view of the garden outside, the clean kitchen with modular-type cabinets, and the all-imported furniture in the living and beds.

The second floor is another story with its romantic balcony, the master bedroom equipped with a monitor for surveillance cameras, the sub-master bedroom with a view of the living, beds, and the hallway overlooking the living room.

On the third floor are two more bedrooms, and a study room, a leisure room and a family hall, and another balcony.

The amenities are everything that you will find in world-class residences. All meant to provide every family the safety, comfort and convenience they need.

"The best part is that The Westwood Lane is just a mere three-step from the commercial and business district that is Ortigas Center, and only a few minutes drive to Bel Magnolia, Eden Hungry La and University Dalton."

The Westwood Lane is a first-class project of Bellwood Development Corp., a subsidiary of Ho-Ex. More information about this project can be had at 716-6000 or 715-4347.

COCOLIFE, THE CITY OF LAGASPI FORGE MOA

Cocolife and The City Government of Legaspi forge an agreement for Government Employees Security Program (GSP) for Rural Health Office and Municipalities. The GSP enables members (all employees of the City Government of Legaspi) to have both life insurance and salary loan through automatic payroll deduction. Present during the signing were (standing from left) Cocolife South Luzon area head Benedict Mercado, City Budget Officer Gloria Balbino, City Mayor Noel Rosal, Cocolife agency manager Marco Antonio Gonzales and underwriter Glenda Bagal.

ECOMMUNICO IS THE BEST

Among the many well-respected, award-winning companies that vied for the recognition, Ecommunico's Technology Corp's Development Business Solutions (Ecommunico) received the best Product Solution Wireless Application during the Wireless Philippines Value Added Services Conference and Exhibition on Feb. 16, at the Edsa Shangri-la Hotel. Shown are Ecommunico's Technology Corp's EVP Mel Vicente (1st from left) accepting the award from Smart's ETS Regional Operations Head Ruben Ocampo, Asia and Oceania Executive Director Felipino S. Agustin-Gonzalez, Sun Wireless product president Judges Cynthia Ramos, and Sheila Sibayan (judge) Marvin Gatbonay.

MFI SCHOLARS IN RELIEF SERVICE

Members of the Ortigas MFI Lagunas scholarship foundation (MFI) provide a humanitarian assistance to flood victims in Lagunas by packing of relief goods from donated by Philippine Foundation (LCP) for Lagunas Lake Development Authority (Laguna). Photo shows the members of such under coordination with the Department of Energy in Tagaytay Sunset Grove, Cavite (standing from left) Alex T. Lacsina, president, MFI; Saudi Arabia Ambassador Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al-Hamdan; Secretary Angelo Reyes; Pedro Foundation lawyer Jose Antonio Ocampo; EVP legal and external relations, Pedro; and Rodel B. Mabalay, president, Pedro.

PANASONIC FOR LEYTE

Malacañang Palace receives from Lopez and Panasonic Group (Philippines) cash donations amounting to PD 100,000 to help in supporting victims of typhoon Bito (second from left) in Leyte landslide. Photo shows Panasonic Manufacturing Philippines Corp president Takashi Fukamachi (right) presenting the cash donation to the Bureau of Mission Richard Pastores (L) Franklin.

PSHR HAS NEW PRESIDENT

Carlos Alonzo Wild, outgoing president of the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines, who recently received an award as new president of the Philippine Society of Human Resource Management (PSHR). Also shown are (clockwise) Mel Rosales-Agana, outgoing Lilo Fernando, Human Resource Development (HRD) Dir. Ely Ong. The society is an exclusive organization of accredited human resource management practitioners who have distinguished themselves in the profession. It is responsible for facilitating among certified members the collaboration of the Personnel Management (PM) and Human Resource Fellow in Personnel Management (HRM) and actively involved in the year 2006 as HRM Coordinator in the society.

POLICYHOLDER WING TRAVEL PACKAGE FROM PHILAMLIFE

Philamlife policy owner Rosie Ramos (left) and colleagues greet, present Chamber Jewelry Mission during their recent Hong Kong holiday getaway. Ramos, over million-dollar Insular Life Premier Profile Premier Philamlife organizes similar promotions and contests yearly as incentive to clients who diligently and promptly pay their premium dues. Valued clients continue to reap the most benefits and rewards from Philamlife premium this year.

MATINCO AT 14TH CONSTRUCTION SHOW CEBU

Matinco Inc., a major player in the country's construction industry, has confirmed its participation in the 14th Construction Show Cebu, to be held on April 28 to 30 at the Cebu Trade Hall, Jones Ave. Cebu City. Shown are (from left) Lilibeth Lucas Matinco, investigating director; L.K. Bacal and Company Inc. and Rolly Hing, AVP for marketing, Matinco Inc. For information on Matinco, call (02) 635-0000 or (02) 635-0001 or 635-0002 or 635-0003; fax 635-0004; 635-1100; 635-0000; 635-0002 (all nos.); (08 6) 3208-2383; (08 6) 3208-2384 or e-mail to info@matinco.com.

Product Files

Benefits of coconut fiber

A LIST OF ARTICLES on coconut fiber indicates many benefits of this product. Most of it is organic (made of 100% coconut fiber). A study on antibacterial fiber, which fiber that was coconut-dried with 0.01 percent bromide solution (Hanh Dinh). Eight grams of fiber can easily be added to the fiber by combining coconut fiber with water. Coconut fiber fiber experts suggest that we should take between 20 and 30 grams of fiber a day. That would be an ideal number for being in a coconut-rich fiber. However, increasing your fiber intake by taking coconut fiber has been therefore effects on coconut health. Adding up to 10 to 20 tablespoons of coconut fiber a day is no little. Yet get the best benefits of coconut fiber then taking supplement company LBD Herbs educational foundation which contains pure coconut fiber and garlic to capsule which may help reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. It is available including organic capsule (one of the best) and regular capsule. The recommended intake is one capsule before every meal. For more information about the product and more also be to consult.

Complete Oriental meal-in-a-box from Ministop

NOW YOU CAN DIG into your favorite Japanese and Oriental meal any time with Ministop's delightful "Japanese Meals — delicious Oriental rice toppings served in convenient boxes. Toppers, which come separately from the rice, are designed to be mixed in to highlight its flavor. It is available in three variety: Chicken Teriyaki, Beef Teriyaki, Ice cubes. Chicken Teriyaki is a Tiling Japanese meal with beer chicken cooked in sweet teriyaki sauce on top of steamed rice. Beef Teriyaki is a classic Chinese meal with large chunks of beef in sweet and spicy sauce on top of hot steamed rice. Finally, Kakiage is a popular Japanese specialty with breaded pork (deep fried) on top of boiled rice (each rice). Ministop Toppers meals are available at a very affordable price of P50 per serving. So treat our Toppers rice toppings in a box at the nearest Ministop store for a delicious, complete and affordable Oriental meals now!

Bits & Clips

Reunion of UP Class '66

MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERsity of the Philippines Class of 1966 will hold reunion on April 29, which Professor Jaime C. Ocampo, using Ford in UP Los Baños. The reunion, which will start at 9 a.m., will be a prelude to the UP Alumni Homecoming on June 24, when Class '66 will be the only jubilarians. Ocampo, who for last 10 yr. "is in preparation for 2006, when the class will be the only jubilarians." Class members in UP Los Baños will host the reunion. The day's program will include a tour of the Alex Museum, a the international Rice Research Institute and the renowned Institute of Animal Science of production in the Institute of Biotechnology and of Food and Nutrition Research Institute. Vic Villapando, president of Inner Circle and a member of the class, will host reminiscence the afternoon. Members of the class who wish to join the reunion can sign up with Antonio D. Rosario (at 525-4287 or 0919-9555209) or Dr. Lydia Rodriguez Santiago (at 0917-8251 or 0922-8164633). Rosario heads Corp. 50 on this year's alumni homecoming, which is UP's contribution to celebrate the public affairs and theater of alumni relations.

Ready for the world with Charmee feminine products

ANNOUNCING THAT A DOCTOR OF THE ANCIENT Healing Art is now also be a famous and famous consultant, Ed Dizon, Jr. Dizon is famous with the safety features that most products lacks. They are chemically safe and secure with the comfort and convenient by Charmee feminine products such as feminine wash, panty liners and the natural feminine wipes. Charmee Feminine Pads has enhanced protection, clear that provides smooth and gentle protection, all around fine guard that helps prevent side leakage, among advances that help keep the pad securely in place and to keep regular day protection. Charmee Feminine Wipes and Charmee Feminine Wipes keep the feeling clean and fresh all the time. With Charmee feminine products, girls can boldly face what the future faces. Also Charmee feminine protection products are available at leading supermarkets, grocery and drugstores nationwide at affordable prices.

Practical courses for lawyers

THE DOMINICAN CENTER AN ACCREDITED institution is offering the following practical courses for lawyers, under PCEC Trainer, 2Bo Rosa Rada on Apr. 6 Practical Aspects, Manual City, April 11 (2-4 p.m.) — The Rules and Role of Mediation Banking, Trade and The Anti-Money Laundering Crime (2.5-4 p.m.) — A Practical Guide to Handling Business Crimes Lawyer, April 25 (2-4 p.m.) — How to Handle Legislative Inquiries and Bills Without Compromise Ethics Rules, April 26 (2-4 p.m.) — How to Conduct Legal Audit in an Agricultural Land Transaction. For more information contact Ann Raymond Dizon, Business Manager at 0906-3395941, dominicancenter@yahoo.com.

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Regulators agree to share info to protect investors

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S FOUR FINANCIAL REGULATORS—Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, Securities and Exchange Commission, Insurance Commission and Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp.—yesterday agreed to share information to help protect the investing public.

The heads of these four agencies comprising the Financial Stress Forum (FSF)—BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr., SEC chair Fe Barin, IC chief Evangeline Geraldino and PDIC officer in charge Imelda Singson—signed a memorandum of agreement to establish a multilateral information-sharing network.

The multilateral MOA lays out a framework for the sharing of relevant reports and information material to the effective performance of the regulators over financial institutions.

"The sharing framework mandates double-case prohibitions as parties agree to strictly observe confidentiality rules on shared data," the FSF said in a statement.

The MOA supplements existing bilateral information sharing arrangements among member agencies.

An integral part of the MOA is the necessity of reports which, among others, describes each pertinent report, its source agency and the frequency each report is submitted to and presented by the issuer agency.

The MOA also calls for the generation of a universal master list of all accredited agents among FSF agencies which covers external auditors, credit rating agencies and appraisal companies.

The covenant also paves the way for a consultation process among FSF agencies when formulating regulations on reports required for submission from its regulated financial institutions.

In the long term, the FSF is keen on policies on six "high-priority" areas affecting the financial system: risk management, capital adequacy, issuance of securities by non-banks, prudential limits, collective investment schemes and analogous investment products.

The FSF is a voluntary cooperative endeavor of the concerned agencies to provide an institutionalized framework for coordinating the supervision and regulation of the financial system, while preserving each agency's mandate.

Airbus sees strong sales for small jets

By Dante L. Lucas

AIRLINES IN ASIA-PACIFIC WILL CONTINUE to buy more short-haul merger aircraft, complemented by periodic acquisitions of larger-range wide body planes, in the near future, according to a spokesman for the world's largest plane maker.

As a result of this trend, European aircraft manufacturer Airbus foresees continuing strong demand for its A320 short- to mid-range aircraft from airlines in the region, including its main clients in the country, Philippine Airlines and Cebu Pacific air.

In a press briefing, Airbus regional commercial representative Anthony Phillips said this prognosis was supported by trends over last year where 468 A320 aircraft were delivered to airlines in the region last year.

"Of the number, 207 [320 aircraft] went to low-cost carriers in the Asia-Pacific," he said.

Major buyers of the smaller jet in the Airbus family last year were airlines from China, India and Malaysia.

All told, 30 low-cost carriers in the region have selected the A320, mainly because of its low operating cost, he said.

The aircraft maker is counting on the continued boom in the low-cost carrier industry, especially since it is still in its infancy in Asia compared to Europe and North America.

Phillips pointed out that only 6 percent of the passenger traffic in the Asia-Pacific region go through low-cost carriers compared to 30 percent in North America and 20 percent in Europe.

Improvement of RP business climate sought

By Rosecel M. Domingo

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND private sector firms yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at evaluating how the country's investment climate may be improved.

The MOU provides for a grant of $87,000 or about 04.5 million to the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines' efforts to study ways to promoting an environment more conducive to business.

Robert Lohan, an economic counselor at the US embassy, said the grant could lead to studies and the issuance of period reports about investment climate issues in the Philippines.

Lohan said the Investment Climate Improvement Project would cover government issues such as corruption and the tax environment as well as the legal framework affecting businesses and regulatory transparency.

Amcham director John Ha Poole said the NGO would basically follow through with and improve on the chamber's Philippine roadmap to attracting more foreign investment.

Porter added that Amcham's concerns in other areas cover peace and order issues, electoral reforms, extension of incentives to companies in the Clark special economic zone and the creation of a Department of Information and Communication Technology.

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Lito Chris Bacot-Fernan

LIFESTYLE

CLAMPING: chef presented two ways...as spring roll and in a pouch

An aspiring Filipino chef must appreciate his country's own cooking and do it properly

Take two for Filipino food promotion

IT MAY SEEM TOO THAT A FILIPINO FOOD festival will be held in Cebu, at the Mactan Shangri-la, next week. Such festivals are usually associated with promoting our cooking abroad.

COUNTRY COOKING

MARIÉ PUNZALAN

But organizers of the Cebu festival are in a way to give their guests an overview of Filipino cuisine beyond the expected Cebu lechon fare.

What we have on the local level however is particular regional food, giving a taste of the flavors and preferences of Filipinos in a specific part of the country.

Three cooking experts were asked to participate. They are Glenda Barretto of Via Mare, Myrna Segismundo of Restaurant 1900 and Claude Tayag who cooks out of his home in Angeles, Pampanga.

Although they will feature the cooking of their respective home provinces, they will also include cooking from other regions, dishes they have learned to cook since they travel throughout the country both for pleasure and for work.

Majority

Work involves judging in culinary competitions or doing cooking demonstrations. It is then expected that the majority of the recipes will be represented in the festival.

Barretto, who is from Iloilo, will include the bolalay and the bantila of her Hiligaynon province. She knows that other places have their own versions of the dishes, to Batangas, for instance, bantila is what is known in other places as pakete na pata.

She is making sure she likes of doing the yunggang manok of Iloilo having learned the necessary spice mix of paprika here from a Ilonggo.

Segismundo is from Batangas and she will do pork adobo the way it's done in her hometown of Lipa. The pieces are covered with a basic mixture of adobo but sugar is added. The mixture is thickened with just do-ol and flavor added with soda bicarbonate.

Tayag will do a cutiping as litsoboy of pork ribs, hongos and sagot. He plans to do chuchu fish sorbetto, using ray where fish like pampanos, then cooking it with a sauce made of fish roe (tokod). He will probably also do ang, the Pampanga dish that is probably known throughout the country.

Dishes that were once strictly regional or provincial do travel and eventually become known in other places. Ang is one. The lechon pinaitan is another. Bigaan is one once. Lumbangnabas I interviewed for a

TURN PAGE C2

GLENDA BARRETTO

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CHEF Jessie Sincioco: Le Soufflé

LEMON Meringue Tart

BICHER Muedi

Picnic recipes, final chapter

FRUIT Trifle

PASTRY Chef Jessie Sincioco: International School for Culinary Arts and Hotel Management

Bicher Muedi (Jessie Sincioco's version)

300 g mooli rice
600 g plain or flavored yogurt
200 g honey
10 g cinnamon powder
300 g raisins
4 pcs grated green apples, skin on
juice of 1 lemon
Mix together.
200 g fresh strawberries cut in quarters
200 g fresh blueberries
250 g grapes, cut into half with skin
2 pcs bananas, cut into small cubes
4 pcs fresh mango, segments only
2 pc ripe mango, cut into small cubes
1 pc fresh plum, diced but keep skin
100 g toasted walnuts
Mix everything properly and serve cold. Best served the following day. Add any fresh fruits of your choice.

Bread and Butter Pudding with vanilla sauce

Butter pudding:
65 g dark raisins soaked in 50 ml rum
200 g bread, 80 g butter, melted
500 ml milk
170 g sugar
340 g eggs, beaten
84 g egg yolks, beaten
2 g vanilla extract
1 g ground cinnamon
3 g salt
Combine milk, 85 g of sugar in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Blend eggs, egg yolks, vanilla, remaining sugar and salt. Gradually add 1/3 of the hot milk, stirring constantly. Add remaining hot milk and strain custard into a bowl.

Add bread, cinnamon and raisins to custard. Let stand 20 to 30 minutes. Bake in 160°C (320°F) preheated oven in water bath until just set, 30-40 minutes, depending on the size of the molds.

Garnish with fresh fruit and serve warm with vanilla sauce and mint leaves.

Vanilla sauce:
4 g vanilla extract
50 g milk
250 g egg yolks
180 g sugar
Combine egg yolks and sugar, whisking with wire whisk to incorporate. Bring milk just below boiling point. Slowly gradually add into egg mixture, stirring.

Return the mixture into a saucepan and cook to 80-85°C, stirring.

Strain and add vanilla extract.

Lemon Meringue Tart

Pate brisee:
500 g butter
500 g shortening
15 g salt
4 pcs egg
450 g ice water, approximately
1,400 g all-purpose flour, sifted

Sieve flour, add butter and shortening. Rub in by hand to incorporate, mix eggs, salt and ice water. Gradually add flour, rub by hand just to incorporate. Transfer to the floured clean tray, refrigerate 30-35 minutes before rolling.

Grease pie mold. Preheat the oven to 160°C (320°F).

Roll pie dough to 3 mm thick, lay on the pie molds. Lay parchment paper on top and blind bake for 15 minutes.

Filling:
Yolks from 10 eggs
16 pcs eggs
300 g sugar, refined
400 g fresh lemon
Juice of 2 pcs of half squeezed juice, strain and mix with the zest. Set aside.

Put eggs and sugar in mixing bowl, whisk in bain-marie bath until eggs melts. Pour in cream and citrus incorporate, strain.

Mix lemon juice until well incorporated and pour mixture into pie shell. Bake in oven for 45 minutes or until mixture set like custard. Cool.

Meringue:
200 g egg whites
1 g cream of tartar
200 g sugar
1 pc lemon zest
Whisk egg whites, cream of tartar, gradually add sugar, whip to stiff peaks, add lemon zest. If you wish, dice a thin orange (see vanilla sponge recipe for trifle), lay on top of tart. Ice tart with new lemon, slightly char with cooking blowtorch sugar. Flash in oven until golden brown.

Fruit Trifle

Vanilla sponge:
11 eggs
7 yolks
500 g sugar
450 g cake flour
50 g cornstarch
120 g butter, melted
10 g vanilla extract
Whisk eggs, egg yolks and sugar together until ribbon stage. Gently fold in dry ingredients with a fine whisk until well-incorporated. Temper melted butter with the small amount of sponge mixture and gently fold into sponge mixture with vanilla extract. Pour on pan, bake in oven 180°C (320°F), 25-30 minutes. Cool.

Custard filling:
500 g milk
3 pcs egg yolks
50 g sugar, refined
20 g cornstarch
2 g vanilla extract
Combine milk with half of the sugar, bring to a boil. Combine remaining sugar with cornstarch, add eggs and mix to a smooth paste. Temper egg and sugar mixture into hot milk and bring to a full boil.

Stir constantly until it thickens slightly. Remove from heat, stir in vanilla.

Brandy syrup:
50 g butter, melt
50 g sugar, refined
50 g glucose or corn syrup
40 g cake flour
5 g brandy
2 g ginger powder
Mix all ingredients into a smooth paste. Spread on tray and bake until golden brown.

Take out of oven, before it sets, cut into triangles and lay on rolling pin to set.

200 g strawberry jam

4 pack strawberry jelly
1 can fruit cocktail
2 slices vanilla sponge or pandan

Make vanilla sponge and sandwich jam, slice into cubes, 3 cm in width. Put in glass, put fruit cocktail on top.

Next, water, pour in jelly powder and mix well dissolved. Set on top water until cool and let jelly set. Pour into glass until the sponge absorbs the jelly, about 1/3 of the glass.

Refrigerate to set.

Cook custard filling and cool slightly before pouring into the glass. Refrigerate until cold, decorate with whipped cream, fresh strawberries, fruit leaves and brandy snap disc.

My new class schedule are on. Call 9280096/6351 63.

Back in regular BC next week!

E-mail the author at cupi@inquirer.com.ph

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aquino

BREAD and Butter Pudding with vanilla sauce

Take two for Filipino . . .

Turn page C1

food back cold so they did not eat vegetables and Europe soldiers came and taught them how to plant and eat them.

But as a dish travels through the country, it excludes traditional ingredients, includes non-traditional ones or substitutes what is available. Pinakbet in other places has squash. Bagoongisan, sometimes fried egg, has been added to it.

Lechon pre-Columbian, have precedence, such as the longsiay, also. It has "grown" from the Ilocano-based original in Mary Ng-Sy-Go's kitchen, the lumpia, it was served separately.

What is important, says Segismundo, is that what they offer in Cebu is truly local or closest to the original cooking. The tuna is exactly what of tuna, that they will have to discuss that point among themselves.

Promotion

It's uncanny how the Filipino food festival in Cebu coincides with the Gastronomy promotion of Project Enlisment—a program that aims to promote Filipino cuisine in the country and abroad. It's a joint effort by the Asia Society, the Department of Tourism, the Food and Restaurant Association and the project sponsor, San Miguel Pure Foods.

The very first step was to make a list of dishes that would be included in a program to standardize recipes. To standardize means agreeing as well on which kind of cuisine, for instance, to promote. Should it be the one with soy sauce and vinegar or the one without soy sauce but colored with achiote seeds? And what about the ancestral Kalinarya recipes? Should it be sourced by ancestral, heirloom, heritage or mestizo?

The Kalinarya group asked to do this includes the three Cebu festival participants—Barotac, Inghamanok and Tapay. Chefs are Conrad Gaisano, Margarita Fernandez, Ariel Manuel and Jessie Sincioco. Calling tried to use Bacalanda, Sotanes and Inocencio; Panes is proprietress of Cibo, Bepan and Cafe Bola; Sincioco is a pastry at le Soufflé; Manuel is chef owner of Lola Darla.

While most of them run restaurants that don't serve Filipino food, they do support the aims of Kalinarya.

It took a while to come up with a list—more than a year, partly because members of the group were busy with their businesses and their own food promotions abroad. Finally, 60 dishes were included. Each Kalinarya member chose which one he/she would do according to his/her recipe. Those will be scanning by selected food experts who will comment on the outcome.

The recipes chosen will be compiled into a book or a manual designed for use by both professional and amateur cooks. Pictures will engage the presentation.

It is hoped that the Kalinarya manual will be used by restaurants in the country and by those who want to open Filipino restaurants abroad.

It is also hoped that it becomes an indispensable tool in the many culinary schools here. That way Filipino cooking will become as important a subject as French, Italian and other Asian cooking being taught today.

For, after all, an aspiring chef must appreciate one's own cooking first, must know how to do it properly, must master its dishes to be truly called a Filipino chef.

JOYCE Segismundo

18 M cardholders

Santiago, author of Home Bill 4030, which seeks to prohibit banks from arbitrarily charging service fees or penalty charges, said over 18 million Filipinos were ATM cardholders serviced by three networks—BancNet, Megalink and Expressline. Collectively, the networks that pool together 38 universal, commercial and thrift banks have over 3,000 ATMs.

Based on the list, the seven banks under Expressline have the lowest service charges—ranging from P5 to P9.50 per withdrawal—on cardholders of other banks," Santiago said. The universal Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp. Ltd. does not collect any service charges at all on withdrawals made by cardholders of other Expressline members.

All Expressline banks allow cardholders of fellow members to make account balance inquiries body without paying any service fees.

Megalinks 23 members charge P10-P12 per withdrawal, except for Philippine Veterans Bank, which collects only P5. Union Bank of the Philippines Inc. has the cheaper service fee, P12 per withdrawal, for cardholders of fellow member banks.

Among Megalink banks, only Philippine Savings Bank and Robinsons Savings Bank Corp. do not collect any service fees on withdrawals made by cardholders of other banks. The two banks, as well as Planters Development Bank, also do not charge P5-P12 for balance inquiries by cardholders of other Megalink members.

The 20 BancNet members charge P8-P19 per withdrawal. The small Universal Savings Bank Inc. collects only P5. Two members—Citibank N.A. and Citibank Savings Inc.—do not collect any service fees on withdrawals by cardholders of other banks. All BancNet banks do not collect service charges on balance inquiries made by cardholders of other members.

Of over 121 million BancNet transactions and 641,000 Megalink daily transactions in 2008, withdrawals accounted for almost half or 49 percent.

Savings accounts average a 3.6 percent interest per annum. In single-digit terms, your P1,000 will hopefully get you P36 at the end of the year. But fortunately, withdrawals on the 15th and 30th, payday, will already cost you about P28 a month.

The price of convenience

By Linda B. Bolido

YOU MAY NOT REALIZE IT BUT using bank automated tellers machines (ATM) is a virtual electronic game. Taking only what you need for the day or a couple of days, is cutting you a lifelong

The practice may be convenient and it may make you feel safer as you do not have to carry a lot of cash but you pay a rather hefty price.

While bank networks have given you access to their ATMs, service fees are often levied on transactions you do with machines other than your own bank's, including simple balance inquiries.

Rep. Joseph Santiago of the Lone district of Catanduanes has released the results of a survey by the Ateneo School of Government of Filipinos to let bank consumers know where they "can get more value for their money by selling charges ATMs and avoiding the costlier ones."

Of course, another thing they can do is to be more prudent in their use of ATMs.

18 M cardholders

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Lens cleaner

The New York Times, in an article by Gardiner Harris on April 14, said Brunch and Lomb had removed temporarily its lenses with Biotrue contact lens solution from store shelves following reports of fungus and under protest from major storeholders.

Health regulators, according to the story, were investigating if the product could have caused 109 cases of fungal infections in contact lens users.

The company was quoted as saying in action did not affect its other products in Asia with Biotrue Lens made outside the United States.

The Times said infections among users in Singapore and Hong Kong led the company to suspend shipments of the product there in February.

Your regular columnist, Marites V. Sison, is indisposed. Please send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Makati and Yague Sts., Makati City, PO Box 2337 Makati Central Post Office, 1263 Makati, or e-mail lbolido@inquirer.com.ph—Editor)

CHICKEN Katsu (above) and Pinjara Sushi (below)

There's a mouse on my table

By Linda B. Bulda

NOW TECHNOLOGY HAS COME TO the restaurant business. But don't expect robot waiters just yet. You don't even have to smile for virtual dining as you actually touch, see, smell and taste your order.

For some with an interactive menu, you can just click the mouse to let the kitchen know your pleasure. At least that's how they do things at Sakae Sushi, arguably the first in the country to introduce such innovation, in The Fort.

The latest project of Robert Young's group, responsible for the UCC chain and Crepes & Greens, the Japanese restaurant also boasts of a new take on the traditional Filipino *turo-turo*. Instead of having everything laid out for you to your of your and pass and you pointing at what you want, *ulam*, drinks, dessert and other items "*pasado*" (serve your *ulam* on a conveyor belt. All you have to do is grab what takes your fancy when it passes your table.

If you like your Japanese food authentic, you don't have to worry that what you'll get is a Westernized or Filipinized version of your favorite. Though, if you think about it, the new technology probably makes it even more authentic given the Japanese's passion for innovation.

TOM Karaga

Interactive

Sakae Sushi, a franchisee of a Singaporean chain, has installed a computer monitor and mouse on every table. There are video clips from the conveyor belt (the restaurant is so designed that the diners have access to the belt without having to stand up and move from their planes) or check out the interactive menu. Here, click on the items they want. At the open kitchen, the chefs get the orders through their own monitors.

Don't fret if you are quick on the trigger and mistakenly click on something other than what you want. A server will easily catch you first if the kitchen get your order right before they bring the food to your table.

At Sakae Sushi, you also get "Pomeranian" hot towels at each table has a tap for this purpose.

Open 11 a.m. 12 midnight, the restaurant offers the all-you-can-eat sushi promo, 3:00-6 p.m., Monday-Saturday. Like other promos of its kind, the condition is no leftovers. Adults pay P499 and senior citizens P399. Children below 7 are charged P299 each. Incidentally, the restaurant has special menus specifically packaged for children. Dishes come same in interactive containers specially designed for kids.

For meetings and conferences, Sakae Sushi is probably, at the moment, unbeatable for our very impersonal homes — every function room (there are five of them) has its own mini-sushi. People holding private meetings or social functions need not go out into the main dining area to use the rest room. Even some that can be joined together to make the space bigger each has its own rest room.

Sakae Sushi is at 26th Crescent West Park, Global City, Rizal Boulevard, Taguig (tel. 8418409 and 8405413). Another branch will open at the new SM Mall of Asia, CM Central Business Park, Bay City, Pasay.

A YOUNG customer checks out kiddie snaps in the interactive menu.

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